

**In Quest of Wisdom: Louise Rosenblatt,
H.D., and the Transactional Literary
Experience**

Richard Vytniorgu

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Contents

Contents	ii
Acknowledgements	iv
Abstract	vi
Introduction: The Personal and the Literary	1
Focus on the Personal	2
Discourses of Selfhood	13
Pathways to Wisdom.....	20
Research Questions.....	24
Methodology	24
Definition of Terms.....	27
Structure	29
1. The Importance of the Individual's Experience.....	31
Towards a Transactional Theory of Experience	32
Commitment to the Individual	54
Conclusion	76
2. Towards a Theory of Personalist Textual Sociability	78
Personalist Textual Sociability.....	80
Personalist Textual Sociability in Practice: Case Studies	109
Conclusion	125
3. Literary Imagination and the Quest for Personal Connection.....	127
Literary Imagination	129
Re-envisioning Human Relations	155
Conclusion	175
4. Literary Studies and the Quest for Wisdom.....	178
Transaction, Transformation, and Quest: Rosenblatt, Greene, Mezirow.....	179
H.D. in Quest	194
Creating Wisdom in the University: Walsh and Maxwell	210
New Directions for Literature and the Human, Affect, and Ethics.....	217
Conclusion	229
Conclusion	232
Bibliography	242

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Abstract

This thesis theorises the relationship between the transactional literary experience and the experience of being in quest of wisdom in literary studies. It achieves this by constructing a dialogue between two thinkers deeply concerned with aesthetic experience and personalist modes of learning: the twentieth-century educator and literary theorist, Louise Rosenblatt, and the modernist prose writer and poet, H.D. The ‘transactional literary experience’ is a phrase at the heart of Rosenblatt’s humanistic philosophy, while H.D. is a figure who devoted her life to articulating the personal experience of being in quest. While literary theory in the past twenty years or so has turned its attention to re-exploring the nature of the human, the role of affect, and the centrality of ethics, this thesis contributes to these fields by foregrounding the pedagogical potential at the heart of them. My approach is to adopt a personalist framework for reading H.D. and Rosenblatt as thinkers who intersect productively by drawing upon romantic, modernist, and existential ideas, tropes, and commitments. Embracing Rosenblatt’s entire oeuvre and unpublished materials, and H.D.’s autobiographical and later quest poetry and prose, the thesis models a personalist approach to literary study by actively developing potential connections between the two thinkers. Chapter 1 lays the groundwork by theorising Rosenblatt’s and H.D.’s emphasis on the individual and her experience. Chapter 2 constructs a theory of what I term ‘personalist textual sociability’, which denotes a mode of context building especially suited to the personal nature of the transactional literary experience. Chapter 3 explores the centrality of literary imagination for fostering personal connections across time and space, both within the literary experience, and in the wider world among real people, and the role of the individual who seeks to communicate their vision of human flourishing to others. Finally, Chapter 4 folds the insights of the first three chapters into an exploration of what it means to be in quest of wisdom, where wisdom is characterised as an inherently existential and personal quality.

Introduction: The Personal and the Literary

Wisdom is an ancient concept, but also a strangely de-familiarising one – a word not often uttered in the academy today. Wisdom has the capacity to unsettle because it is largely an unknown quantity; unlike some forms of knowledge, there is something elusive about this other kind of knowing. ‘We know it when we see it’, some might like to say. Wisdom seems personal, connected to learning. Wisdom delights in the growth and development of concrete personalities. It is a condition grounded in process, in moments of transformation, flashes of insight, quivers of intimacy. Far from being a linear process, growth in wisdom can be erratic because human beings are frequently unpredictable; indeed, perhaps wisdom delights in this human quality. In the realm of wisdom, knowledge about the world and human existence seems harnessed to helping individuals make a better life for themselves and for others, in transforming what is into what might be. In a world beset by challenges that call for wisdom, would anybody therefore argue that wisdom can be dispensed with? The question this thesis asks then is whether or not the language of wisdom has any place in contemporary English studies. How can the quest for wisdom be integrated into a stream of literary study which has institutional sanction?

There are two important elements to hold in balance as I set about answering these questions. The first is that, as an intervention in literary theory, my approach is to connect ideas about literature and literary experience to the institutional contexts in which these are explored. Intersecting literary studies and English education, ‘In Quest of Wisdom’ foregrounds the capacity for wisdom-oriented learning inherent in specific kinds of literary experience. Secondly, in order to honour the personal nature of wisdom – its capacity to be incarnated in

living human beings – my approach is also to develop a theoretical contribution which is grounded in an interpersonal study of two thinkers.

Louise Rosenblatt (1904-2005) was an American literary theorist who sought to develop literary theory openly in the context of student learning and for this reason she is often called an ‘educator’. But she also refused to separate literary theoretical concerns from pedagogical ones. From the 1930s until her death, in 2005, Rosenblatt engaged with and critiqued a range of dominant critical approaches (formalism, structuralism, and poststructuralism) and channelled them through her pioneering vision concerning the function and value of literary studies for American society. H.D. (1886-1961), on the other hand, was a modernist American poet and prose writer who thought hard about personal transformation. Interpreted as a thinker, H.D.’s affective, emotionally-wrought writing catalyses Rosenblatt’s more abstract and analytical writing. H.D. is rightly touted as being characteristic, perhaps even unique among modernists for her combination, particularly in her later writing, of personal self-revelation and mystical thought concerning art’s relationship to personal and social transformation. An analysis of Rosenblatt’s work will benefit from that of H.D.’s, in order to incarnate – to tussle with – some of her theoretical convictions, and H.D. needs Rosenblatt in order to generalise her ideas and practice, to take them out of ‘H.D.’ and let them address the quests of those other than herself. As I will show, literary experiences can be a potent means of fostering interpersonal connections, in increasing understanding of and empathy for others. I am simply modelling this approach in my own method, creating a crucible of dialogic synergy, personalising the theoretical, and theorising the personal.

Focus on the Personal

Not only do Rosenblatt and H.D. focus *on* personal experiences of art in their work, but they actively assert their importance, albeit in different ways. Not only is the focus on the personal

a descriptive account of where my thinkers often pinpoint their attention, but it is also a normative rallying cry, to *focus* on the personal, both on oneself and on others, and to move the personal to the centre of attention during a literary experience, because to do so is to open oneself up to the possibility of increasing in wisdom. As I shall explain in Chapter 1, an idea of the individual and her experience is the starting point for each thinker's divergent paths, meeting at points in glances of synergy. Yet because the 'individual' and the 'personal' are terms which are liable to multiple interpretations as to what they indicate, I have chosen to ground my study in a specifically personalist framework – personalist rather than humanist.

There is more that unites humanism and personalism as philosophies than divides them. But they do differ in some important ways, and particularly given the entrance of the 'new literary humanism' onto the literary theoretical playing field, it seems prudent (not to say wise?) to stake out my position from the outset. In his book, *Literature and the Human* (2013), Andy Mousley, who advocates a 'new literary humanism', explores literature's distinctive ability to engage emotion, approach history in experiential ways, tackle the complex binary of the universal and the particular, and behold instances of depth in literature, leading to renewed insight into the human condition.¹ In his work Mousley has created a modern literary humanism by re-engaging with Renaissance humanism, especially within the context of Shakespeare studies. For Mousley, humanism need not, indeed should not, be naïve, essentialist, anti-religious, or foundational. Instead, humanism can be seen to be deeply engaged with human complexity. What Mousley sees is an inherent flexibility in humanism, and he offers a new perspective after the years of High Theory, which tended to see humanism as ideologically and theoretically suspect.²

¹ Andy Mousley, *Literature and the Human: Criticism, Theory, Practice* (London: Routledge, 2013). See also Andy Mousley, 'The new literary humanism: towards a critical vocabulary', *Textual Practice*, 24 (2010): 819-39.

² Offering a new perspective after High Theory (the explosion of theoretical thought in the West from the 1960s through the 1980s) is something Peter Barry attributes to theoretical approaches from the 1990s, especially new

The point of departure for personalism within the context of literary studies is that it is more overtly concerned with the concrete person than humanism is. As I understand it, literary humanism, both new and old, is, among other things, interested in demarcating human traits that seem to persist across time and space. Mousley, for instance, is keen to nuance and complicate some of the older, taken-for-granted assumptions about human nature that were swept away during the years of poststructuralism. To that end he talks of ‘deconsecrated universals’ and ‘re-consecrated universals’, the creation of which requires the reader’s critical faculties.³ Personalism, on the other hand, is more exclusively interested in the microcosmic world of specific human beings, seeing them as existential subjects. According to Keith E. Yandell in the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (1998), personalism ‘develops a worldview that begins with immediate, self-conscious experience and interprets not only the life of the individual but the world at large in personalistic terms. This involves the claim that the basic categories or fundamental concepts of our thought should be understood in terms applicable to persons and their experiences’.⁴ The theory of literary studies which I am developing in this project is absolutely concerned with re-connecting literature to ‘persons and their experiences’, with conceiving literary study as an explorative, wisdom-oriented journey which creates a web of personal (and interpersonal) connections, from specific readers to literary work(s) and back out again, to other students and people beyond the classroom.

Although younger than humanism, personalism, which originated in the 1780s with F. H. Jacobi as a critique of pantheism, is a transnational philosophy, with pockets of personalist thought appearing in Scandinavia, Britain (where it was called ‘personal idealism’), North

aestheticism. See Peter Barry, *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory*, 3rd ed. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), p. 301.

³ Mousley, *Literature and the Human*, pp. 79-80.

⁴ Keith E. Yandell, ‘Personalism’ in Edward Craig (ed.), *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 1998).

America, France, and Russia.⁵ It is a Russian strain of personalism in which I am especially interested, and which I draw upon at various times throughout the thesis. According to the twentieth-century Russian-British philosopher, Isaiah Berlin, attitudes towards literature and the arts can be divided into two broadly cohesive types – the ‘French’ and the ‘Russian’. Berlin makes this symbolic distinction in order to show how Russian thinkers conceive the human, implying that a personalistic approach is somehow characteristic of Russians in particular, and that this personalistic mentality has a bearing on how literature should be approached: ‘Man is one, and what he does, he does with his whole personality’.⁶ Whereas the ‘French’ approach is more atomistic, creating divisions within the personality and perhaps seeking universals, the Russian viewpoint is integrative and is valued as such for its commitment to what Russians perceive to be sincerity. I draw attention to Berlin’s distinction because it strengthens my tendency in this thesis to adopt a specifically Russian strain of personalism with which to organise the various facets of the project: it is a perspective which is earnest, self-aware, plain-speaking, and generally lacking in self-importance.

In particular, the philosophies of the Slavophile, Ivan Kireevsky (1806-1856), and the Silver Age thinker, Nikolai Berdyaev (1874-1948), whose philosophy I shall draw upon throughout this thesis, emphasise connections between a focus on the person (philosophical anthropology), a particular way of thinking (epistemology), and an approach to human relations (sociology), which represent the three areas of concentration in the thesis and which manifest in the progression of its chapters. Kireevsky was a more overtly religious thinker than Berdyaev, deeply preoccupied with the emergence of Russian self-definition. Although Berdyaev, who was influenced by Kireevsky largely through the intermediary work of Vladimir Solovyov (1853-1900), was also deeply spiritual, he moulded his intellectual work

⁵ See Jan Olof Bengtsson, *The Worldview of Personalism: Origins and Early Development* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

⁶ Isaiah Berlin, *Russian Thinkers* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1994), p. 128.

by selectively working with non-Christian (and non-Russian) materials as well, including the philosophical anthropology of Max Scheler, the polemics against ‘the good’ in Nietzsche’s writing, the emphasis on social justice in the work of Marx, and the psychological insights of Adler and Jung. The personalist insights of Kireevsky and Berdyaev enable me to draw connections between Rosenblatt and H.D. which would not be possible were I to frame the synthesis simply in terms of humanism. Berdyaev in particular is uniquely positioned in time and place as a Russian personalist intervention in Western perspectives which touched and influenced Rosenblatt and H.D. Profound, mystical, and with a sense of apocalyptic urgency, Berdyaev offers a discourse for focusing on the personal in the modern, twentieth-century era, which is neither pessimistic nor optimistic, but grounded in an apprehension of the absolute value of the concrete, personal subject. In short, I am not saying that Rosenblatt and H.D. were personalists, although they were often personalistic in their visions. Rather, I am engaging a personalist philosophical framework because it allows me to do the work of this thesis – in particular, creating synergies between Rosenblatt and H.D. that draw out the incarnate, existential quality of being in quest of wisdom, where the experiences of concrete persons matter.

To focus now on H.D. specifically, my position in this work is to contribute to scholarship that reads her as a thinker. In 2003 Adalaide Morris noted that critics ‘rarely define H.D. as a thinker’.⁷ In 2012, however, Polina Mackay asserted that ‘first and foremost, H.D. is a modern thinker, evident primarily in her adoption of the language of psychoanalysis, her connection between the artist’s vision and spirituality and her elaborate interest in sexuality and sexual expression’.⁸ These three themes arguably constitute the general direction which

⁷ Adalaide Morris, *How to Live / What to Do: H.D.’s Cultural Poetics* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2003), p. 11.

⁸ Polina Mackay, ‘H.D.’s modernism’ in Nephie J. Christodoulides and Polina Mackay (eds), *The Cambridge Companion to H.D.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 51-62, p. 52.

H.D. scholarship and criticism has taken in the past decade or so; although interest in H.D. and psychoanalysis seems to have waned since the publication of Claire Buck's exploratory *H.D. and Freud: Bisexuality and a Feminine Discourse* (1991) and Diane Chisholm's authoritative *H.D.'s Freudian Poetics; Psychoanalysis in Translation* (1992). What I wish to make clear is that by conceiving H.D. as a thinker, it is also possible, indeed desirable, to read her as a learner as well. I am, so to speak, personalising our understanding of H.D. by drawing attention to her as an existential subject whose learning, whose development, enabled her to exercise her freedom in creating her own sense of selfhood.

It is arguably the areas of spiritualism and the occult that have seen the most concentrated focus of recent H.D. scholarship, which has often paralleled the recent surge of scholarly publications of some of H.D.'s complex later and previously unpublished prose writing, such as *The Sword Went Out to Sea* (2007), *Majic Ring* (2013), and *The Hirslanden Notebooks* (2015). Elizabeth Anderson's *H.D. and Modernist Religious Imagination: Mysticism and Writing* (2013) reads some of H.D.'s mature writing in the light of Hélène Cixous's ideas about writing and the sacred. Anderson's book highlights H.D.'s interest in the material world and the search for the sacred, especially in times of conflict (such as the Second World War).⁹ Meanwhile, Suzanne Hobson's 2013 essay, 'Credulous Readers: H.D. and Psychic Research Work' establishes H.D. as a self-identified thinker in terms of her spiritualist activities carried out in London during the Second World War, as explored in *The Sword Went Out to Sea* and *Majic Ring*. Hobson looks at the delicate balance H.D. struck between conveying to her 'credulous readers' the authenticity of her experience of spiritualism, and her insistence on the scientific rigour of her 'research work'.¹⁰

⁹ Elizabeth Anderson, *H.D. and Modernist Religious Imagination: Mysticism and Writing* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013).

¹⁰ Suzanne Hobson, 'Credulous Readers: H.D. and Psychic Research Work' in John Attridge (ed.), *Incredible Modernism: Literature, Trust and Deception* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), pp. 51-65.

Yet it is probably Matte Robinson's *The Astral H.D.: Occult and Religious Sources and Contexts for H.D.'s Poetry and Prose* (2016) that crystallises the idea of H.D. as an extensive reader and sensitive thinker with regard to her occult references in some of her obscure later poetry and prose.¹¹ Robinson's work requires that further attention to H.D. recognises her as a formidable thinker, whose learning manifests itself in her interest in complex reference systems for self-discovery. However, I suggest that H.D. was not a 'learner' in the sense in which educationalists ordinarily use the term; for only a short period in her life (1905-06) was she registered (at Bryn Mawr College) on an institutional programme of learning. But in a broader sense H.D.'s entire adult life was concerned with learning. She was concerned with understanding her experiences and delineating a sense of self. At times she has even been criticised for being narcissistic: only relatively recently, in 2002, Ian Hamilton wrote of her as a 'thinly gifted poet', whose autobiographical fiction, moreover, has become a 'godsend to chroniclers of her various psychic upheavals' and 'offers an unappealing mix of cosmic breathiness and fiddling narcissism'.¹² Some of H.D.'s writing does seem needlessly repetitive, disjointed, and unclear, which tends to undermine her overall project of inviting readers to imagine her personal experience. Nevertheless, it is her autobiographical orientation which invites more nuanced readings which link this genre to issues of learning.

I find the most persuasive readings of H.D.'s oeuvre which confront her autobiographical impetus to be Susan Stanford Friedman's *Penelope's Web: Gender, Modernity, H.D.'s Fiction* (1990) and *Psyche Reborn: The Emergence of H.D.* (1981), alongside Janice S. Robinson's *H.D.: The Life and Work of an American Poet* (1982). Admittedly, these texts are likely to be those Hamilton singled out as being particularly

¹¹ Matte Robinson, *The Astral H.D.: Occult and Religious Sources and Contexts for H.D.'s Poetry and Prose* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016).

¹² Ian Hamilton, *Against Oblivion: Some Lives of the Twentieth-Century Poets* (London: Viking, 2002), pp. 62-66.

interested in the supposedly less desirable aspects of H.D.'s work. And yet *Psyche Reborn* and Robinson's *H.D.* come closest, in my opinion, to seeing H.D. as a learner.

Robinson in particular seems to start from the premise that H.D. was a profoundly personal writer, whose interest in psychoanalysis and modernism means that her presentations of personal experience are especially original and compelling. I am fully aware of the criticisms levelled against Robinson's biography, most severely by Sandra M. Gilbert in her 1983 review essay for *Contemporary Literature*, 'H.D.? Who Was She?'.¹³ Gilbert accuses Robinson of fantasising about H.D.'s relationship with D. H. Lawrence (something which almost convinced the critic Denis Donoghue of its truth) and of committing various academic sins; as with H.D.'s in her early essays, Robinson's discourse in this biography escapes its generic conventions, and depending on the perspective, this could be seen in either a positive or a negative light.¹⁴ But Robinson's premise is essentially the same as Friedman's – that H.D.'s artistry was intimately connected to her preoccupation with self-knowledge and the quest for understanding that would lead to personal and social transformation. Robinson's Lawrence—H.D. thesis can be ignored while still gleaning important critical insights concerning H.D.'s project as a thinker: her emphasis on the individual and her experience, her aesthetic imagination and its methodology, her approach to history and human relations across space and time, and finally, her need to process her experience and write herself toward transformation.

Turning to Rosenblatt, one is confronted with someone who can more straightforwardly be categorised as a thinker. Her genres were the theoretical exposition, the critical essay, the academic interview, and the review. So from one perspective, evaluating Rosenblatt as a thinker is nowhere near as challenging a task as it is with regard to H.D. But Rosenblatt is a

¹³ Sandra M. Gilbert, 'H.D.? Who Was She?', *Contemporary Literature*, 24 (1983): 496-511.

¹⁴ Robinson implies that Lawrence was the father of H.D.'s daughter, Perdita. See Denis Donoghue, 'Her Deepest Passion was D. H. Lawrence', *New York Times*, February 14, 1982. <http://www.nytimes.com/1982/02/14/books/her-deepest-passion-was-dh-lawrence.html> (accessed January 21, 2015).

complicated figure because of her historically liminal status in literary studies and the tendency for others to mistake her for a reader-response theorist *only* concerned with subjective responses to literature.¹⁵

For her first twenty years in the profession, Rosenblatt was installed in liberal arts departments at Barnard College (1928-38) and Brooklyn College (1938-48). In 1948 she moved to an education department and gained professorship at New York University (NYU), where she remained until 1972, when she retired from this position. From 1972 until around the year 2000, Rosenblatt held visiting professorships at various universities, including Rutgers University and the University of Miami, while also holding a position as Emeritus Professor at NYU. Moreover, she was an interdisciplinary thinker whose interests ranged across the arts, social sciences, and even the natural sciences. She was mostly neglected as a thinker in literary circles until the reader-response conversations of the 1980s and 1990s, but she had always been popular in English education circles since the 1970s, particularly after the Dartmouth Seminar in 1966, which inaugurated widespread interest in the United States in reading as personal process.¹⁶ Some of Rosenblatt's major contributions only appeared after her official retirement date, by which time she was already well into her seventies.

Thus, even her age factors into her relative neglect in literary studies; in the current, historically conscious environment of English studies, Rosenblatt could prove a stumbling block to those who would wish to pigeonhole her as belonging to a movement or an epoch. In his 1995 foreword essay to the fifth edition of *Literature as Exploration*, Wayne Booth chose instead to phase Rosenblatt's career in terms of 'moments' in literary theory, which is a helpful

¹⁵ See Gordon M. Pradl, *Literature for Democracy: Reading as a Social Act* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1996), pp. 81-93.

¹⁶ See John Dixon, *Growth through English* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971). Thanks to Gordon Pradl for pointing this out to me.

way of positioning her.¹⁷ ‘Moments’ suggest a dynamic movement of thought particular to the individual in question, while still recognising lines of continuity through the decades.

After 1972 Rosenblatt tried to enter more directly into conversations with literary theorists, and her 1978 work, *The Reader, the Text, the Poem: The Transactional Theory of the Literary Work*, published by Southern Illinois University Press under ‘Literary Theory’, is self-conscious about its difference to dominant theoretical trends, especially structuralism and lingering New Critical approaches. By her final collection of essays, *Making Meaning with Texts: Selected Essays* – published days before her death, in 2005 – Rosenblatt managed to weave her educational commitments and perspectives fairly seamlessly with her literary-theoretical ones. In fact, as commentators on Rosenblatt’s work have sometimes noted, for her, literary theory and issues of learning should never be separated.¹⁸

It is this connected aspect of her vision that this thesis draws out, and, by putting Rosenblatt into dialogue with H.D. under an organising framework of personalism, it offers the first extended posthumous study of her entire output, from the 1920s through to the 2000s. Aspects of Rosenblatt’s modernism, postmodernism, and feminism have been explored by Elizabeth A. Flynn, and as such offer a glimpse into her influences.¹⁹ Norbert Elliot’s ‘A Midrash for Louise Rosenblatt’ (2008) focuses on the early development of Rosenblatt’s thought, while Mark Dressman and Joan Parker Webster have carefully analysed the differences in the various different editions of *Literature as Exploration*.²⁰ Jeanne M. Connell, on the other hand, has reflected on Rosenblatt’s philosophical debt to the American pragmatist

¹⁷ Wayne Booth, ‘Foreword’ in Louise M. Rosenblatt, *Literature as Exploration*, 5th ed. (New York: MLA, 1995), pp. vii-xiv.

¹⁸ See the collection of essays in John Clifford’s edited volume, *The Experience of Reading: Louise Rosenblatt and Reader-Response Theory* (Portsmouth, NH: Boynton / Cook, 1991). See also Pradl, *Literature for Democracy*.

¹⁹ See Elizabeth A. Flynn, *Feminism Beyond Modernism* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2002), pp. 99-115 and ‘Louise Rosenblatt and the Ethical Turn in Literary Theory’, *College English*, 70 (2007): 52-69.

²⁰ Norbert Elliot, (Elliot); Mark Dressman and Joan Parker Webster, ‘Retracing Rosenblatt: “A Textual Archaeology”’, *Research in the Teaching of English*, 36 (2001): 110-45.

philosopher, John Dewey, and highlights the role Rosenblatt's late political activism in the early 2000s played in terms of rounding off her career.²¹ Dewey, of course, was a crucial influence on Rosenblatt's thought; she adapted and affirmed his ideas on epistemology, art, education, and politics, and his ideas will appear periodically through the thesis.

As might be expected, Rosenblatt's legacy primarily survives in English education circles, predominantly in the United States, but to an extent in Britain also, although James Britton was probably more of a founding influence in British English education.²² Nevertheless, Rosenblatt has become staple reading for training secondary school teachers in English, and British academics such as Michael Benton have developed Rosenblatt's transactional theory as applied to secondary school teaching of English.²³

In spite of the way in which English educationalists have positioned Rosenblatt as one of the founders of American English education, it is perplexing that very few, except Flynn and possibly Gordon M. Pradl (see below), have continued to relate, as Rosenblatt did, the transactional theory to literary studies in higher education, and attempts to put the transactional theory into dialogue with contemporary literary theory are non-existent. By focusing on Rosenblatt as a thinker who linked literary theory with issues of learning and the growth of the individual, I am able to return discussion of Rosenblatt's transactional theory to conversations in literary theory – with literature's relationship to the human, affect, and ethics. In short, in different but intersecting ways Rosenblatt and H.D. engage with various discourses of selfhood in order to create their particular personalistic visions.

²¹ Jeanne M. Connell, 'Continue to Explore: In Memory of Louise Rosenblatt (1904-2005)', *Education and Culture*, 21 (2005): 63-79.

²² Gordon Pradl studied Britton and edited a volume of his essays, *Prospect and Retrospect: Selected Essays of James Britton* (Montclair, NJ: Boynton / Cook, 1982).

²³ For example, see Michael Benton, 'Exploring Response' in Michael Benton et al., *Young Readers Responding to Poems* (London: Routledge, 1988), pp. 1-35, pp. 13-17. I am grateful to Marcello Giovanelli for directing me to Benton.

Discourses of Selfhood

At this introductory stage it is important to indicate how Rosenblatt and H.D. conceive of selfhood, as the 'personal' is so central to this project. My overarching personalist framework takes 'selfhood' and 'person' to be one and the same entity: personalism understands the person to be an existential subject, created over time by the agency of individuals as they transact with their environment (including with one another). This does not mean, however, that a person is ever completed; on the contrary, selfhood is subject to flux and change. And yet personalism envisages lines of continuity in selfhood as well as manifestations of change. 'Person is resistance', wrote Berdyaev, 'resistance to the determinism of society and nature, an heroic struggle for self-definition from within'.²⁴ For Berdyaev in particular, personalism is always existentialist; human experience is pervaded by contradiction, tension, and paradox. Although he acknowledged the new wave of twentieth-century European existentialism created by Heidegger, Jaspers, and Sartre (among others), Berdyaev believed that existentialism per se was much older, for 'we may discover its vivifying theme throughout the whole history of thought'.²⁵ Seen through the lens of Berdyaev's personalism, existentialism entails 'emphasis on the subject as against the object, of the will as against the intellect, of the concrete and individual as against the general and universal; the antithesis between intuitive and conceptual knowledge, between existence and essence'.²⁶ These binaries are characteristic of the dualisms which Berdyaev sees throughout life. Moreover, for Berdyaev they are a peculiarly Russian fascination which tends to emphasise contradiction and paradox, whereby 'The human soul is [seen to be] divided, an agonizing conflict between opposing elements is going on in it': for

²⁴ Nikolai Berdyaev, 'The Problem of Man (Towards Construction of a Christian Anthropology)', trans. Stephen S. Janos ([1936] 2000). http://www.berdyaev.com/berdiaev/berd_lib/1936_408.html (accessed February 17, 2017).

²⁵ Nicolas Berdyaev, *Dream and Reality: An Essay in Autobiography*, trans. Katharine Lampert (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1950), p. 102.

²⁶ Ibid.

example, a conflict between ‘opposites [such] as love and hate, purity and uncleanness, concentration and absent-mindedness, etc.’.²⁷ That Berdyaev affirmed binaries does not mean, however, that they are always and everywhere normative or should be endorsed without adaptation. However, personalism, via its romantic and existentialist overtones, certainly embraces complexity and in part locates this at the kernel of life’s variety that brings it into proximity with new humanist thought, as I outline above.

For the purposes of this thesis, I have identified three ‘discourses’ which Rosenblatt and H.D. touch upon with varying degrees of intensity in their work that forge connective lines between my thinkers as well as throwing into relief the wider personalist vision at the heart of this thesis. Although historical moments of thought in their own right, discourses of romanticism, modernism, and existentialism offered Rosenblatt and H.D. concepts and sentiments which enabled them to articulate their sense of who the individual is and might become, particularly in relation to aesthetic experience. They are, in turn, discourses which feed into and grow out of this thesis’s core personalist position.

Rosenblatt’s interest in romanticism, primarily British in focus, coalesces around the potential of aesthetic experience to shape the imaginations of individual people, and thus potentially change the world. In *The Reader, the Text, the Poem: The Transactional Theory of the Literary Work* (1978), she frames her career as trying to reconcile two romantic positions: Keats’s ‘sense of the unique values of art’ and Shelley’s ‘feeling for its social origins and social impact’ (see Chapter 3 for more on Shelley).²⁸ Linked to Keats’s sense of art’s distinctiveness, Rosenblatt drew upon Wordsworth’s preface to *Lyrical Ballads* (1798) and stressed romanticism’s concern with affect, or with ‘powerful feelings’.²⁹ By offering a theory of

²⁷ Nicolas Berdyaev, *The Destiny of Man*, trans. Natalie Duddington (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1945), pp. 74.

²⁸ Louise M. Rosenblatt, *The Reader, the Text, the Poem: The Transactional Theory of the Literary Work*, paperback ed. (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1994), p. xi.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

aesthetic experience at the heart of a wide-ranging vision of literary study, Rosenblatt combined emphasis on an individual's personal experience of literature with attention to its potential social impact.

H.D.'s interest in romanticism, on the other hand, has been more clearly documented, especially by Cassandra Laity in *H.D. and the Victorian Fin de Siècle: Gender, Modernism, Decadence* (1996). Since H.D.'s early days in Pennsylvania with her then fiancé, Ezra Pound, she expressed interest in romantic authors. Pound and H.D. would read William Morris, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Swinburne, and Pound would write verses for H.D. after their style; he collected these poems in 'Hilda's Book' (written 1905-07). In *White Rose and the Red* (written 1948), H.D. revisits the Pre-Raphaelites and writes herself into a depiction of Elizabeth Siddall (see Chapter 3). H.D.'s imagination was periodically fired by historical artistic experimenters, whose lives and personalities, for her at least, were often as interesting as their art.

H.D.'s early autobiographical fiction also reflects her interest in personal emotions and desire – in the microcosm of the individual. *Paint it Today* (written 1921) and *HERmione* (written 1927) utilise first-person points of view and lyrical outbursts of emotion; these texts can be read as cries of the heart, expressing resistance to an oppressive home environment and the need to retreat from others in order to create a world of intimacy and passionate intellectual activity. What Hamilton reads as 'fiddling narcissism' might thus more accurately be read as stemming from a romantic tradition of self-examination, self-expression, individuality, and passionate emotion directed at these ends. Part of H.D.'s originality, however, was because she revisited romantic tropes in a modernist way.

In her 2012 essay, 'H.D.'s modernism', Polina Mackay argues that H.D.'s modernism can most clearly be seen in her early imagist aesthetics, in her work for 'little magazines', in her interest in psychoanalysis and spirituality, and in her experimentation with gender and

sexuality.³⁰ Mackay notes that H.D. refined traditional romantic preoccupations, such as natural beauty, in a modernist way through her clear and sharp imagist aesthetic, revealed in her 1916 collection of poetry, *Sea Garden*. Miranda B. Hickman has further argued that H.D.'s natural imagery is non-gendered and emphasises power relations, especially the experience of being in thrall to an external presence – 'a surrender on the part of one figure involving an intermingling of passivity and self-command'.³¹ Without question H.D.'s aesthetics, throughout her career, were experimental; her genres are famously and problematically indeterminate, as is her 'subject matter': they are many and various, and frequently overlap and react with each other. Rather than a decisive break with her self-identified Victorian predecessors (Swinburne, Rossetti, Morris), it is more correct to talk of revision, tussle, and transformation. H.D.'s modernism is actively in conversation with a self-identified romantic literary past.

I contend though that it is Susan Stanford Friedman who has done the most to highlight the role of H.D.'s modernism in forming her sense of quest. In *Psyche Reborn* Friedman places H.D.'s prose and poetry after the First World War as part of a broader search for new meanings in light of so much destruction. H.D. is situated alongside W. B. Yeats, Hart Crane, D. H. Lawrence, and William Carlos Williams – writers who often figure characters or speakers in search of a new settlement and new experiences in the wake of former decay. Typically, such authors might also allude to or explicitly invoke mythological and religious themes, metaphors, and tropes in order to articulate their vision. Friedman writes that 'H.D.'s development from imagist to epic art places her squarely in the center of this modernist mainstream. Her work shares with all of these writers the fundamental spirit of quest given shape by myth and mythic consciousness, by religious vision or experience, and by a new synthesis of fragmented

³⁰ Mackay, 'H.D.'s modernism', pp. 51-52.

³¹ Miranda B. Hickman, "'Uncanonically seated': H.D. and literary canons" in Christodoulides and Mackay (eds), *The Cambridge Companion to H.D.*, pp. 9-22, p. 19.

traditions'.³² H.D.'s individualised vision of quest, therefore, is a modernist refraction of an essentially romantic preoccupation with the individual, perhaps with his loneliness, with his search for identity and meaning in life.

Moreover, as Shari Benstock has noted, H.D. was associated with other women modernists in Paris during the 1920s, and when considering the context of H.D.'s modernism, it can be useful to position her, if only for reference, as part of a broader collection of artists who considered Paris as at least an important professional centre if not the cultural epicentre of the world.³³ Although she was still at the beginning of her career in the mid-1920s, Rosenblatt was also a part of the Paris community of American ex-pats, even if she remained on the fringes. Rosenblatt completed her doctoral thesis at the Sorbonne University in Paris between 1926 and 1931, and in her interviews she is open about her literary networks at the time. Rosenblatt lived on the Left Bank and often used to go to Ford Madox Ford's apartment in the afternoons, where she met W. H. Auden, Robert Penn Warren, and Gertrude Stein; Rosenblatt and the poet, Léonie Adams, were also good friends, and this link constitutes a tantalising if ultimately insignificant connection to H.D., who also knew Adams.³⁴

Nevertheless, Rosenblatt felt connected to developments in literature at the time by frequenting the bookshops run by Sylvia Beach (for Anglophones) and Adrienne Monnier (for Francophones).³⁵ Together with the poet and critic, Allen Tate, and his wife, the novelist and critic, Caroline Gordon, Rosenblatt frequented the Café Select, and it was here she intended to meet Hart Crane (she eventually met him at his studio on the Left Bank).³⁶

³² Susan Stanford Friedman, *Psyche Reborn: The Emergence of H.D.* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1987), p. 5.

³³ Shari Benstock, *Women of the Left Bank: Paris, 1900-1940* (London: Virago, 1987), pp. 311-356. H.D. was never enamoured with Paris.

³⁴ Louise Rosenblatt, *The Reminiscences of Louise Michelle Rosenblatt*. 2 vols. Interview with Ed Erwin. New York: Columbia University Oral History Research Office. 22, 24 June and 13 and 15 July 1982, p. 69.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 259.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 105-106.

The significance of all these networking events in Rosenblatt's Parisian life is that she began to assess a modernist aesthetic and centre of productivity, and particularly to relate it back to her PhD work, which was concerned with English advocates of the autonomy of art from social concerns in the Victorian era.³⁷ Rosenblatt maintained sympathy for modernism, especially for its emphasis on sexual freedom and a re-evaluation of gender roles; she also became interested in scientific explanations of human behaviour and psychology.

Later, in the 1960s, Rosenblatt indirectly reaffirmed her commitment to modernism and psychological intensity in her supervision of Mitchell A. Leaska's doctoral thesis (1970) on Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*, in which he connects his project to Rosenblatt's theory of literary experience.³⁸ The hint is that Woolf's modernist aesthetic finds an appropriate parallel in Rosenblatt's experiential approach to literary study (see Chapter 2). Having said this, Rosenblatt's engagement with literary modernism is fairly minimal and out of the three discourses in this thesis, modernism is the least directly relevant; romanticism and existentialism are more pertinent to the overall direction of my theory. Indeed, a focus on experience and the freedom of the individual resonates more strongly with Rosenblatt's and H.D.'s engagement with existentialism, which represents the third major connecting point between Rosenblatt and H.D. – their third discourse of selfhood.

There are two levels to framing my thinkers' engagement with existentialism. The first is to find explicit instances where Rosenblatt and H.D. speak of existentialism – usually the French twentieth-century variety. The second, perhaps more fruitful path is to approach existentialism through personalism, after the manner of Berdyaev, as a 'vivifying theme' latent throughout their work. That is, I will proceed by highlighting areas where the subject, the

³⁷ Her conclusion foregrounds the contemporary situation by noting censorship, current critical trends, and artistic activity.

³⁸ See Mitchell A. Leaska, *Virginia Woolf's Lighthouse: A Study in Critical Method* (London: Hogarth, 1970), p. 6.

individual, the concrete, existence, intuition, and passion are emphasised or given special attention. If romanticism and modernism were two historical moments of thought and expression concerning individual experience with which Rosenblatt and H.D. were engaged – a focus *on* the personal – existentialism can be said to be a deeper commitment they shared – a reminder to *focus* on the personal. Existentialism is a discourse which can perhaps more readily be put to work with personalism in the present institutional context of literary studies, than romanticism and modernism.

In *Reader, Text, Poem*, Rosenblatt states that ‘Existentialism strengthened certain of my emphases, though mainly the early literary works of Malraux and Sartre’.³⁹ Rosenblatt’s understanding of existentialism is confined to twentieth-century French works; she rarely if ever mentions Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, or Heidegger – philosophers whose work represents a northern European existentialist tradition ranging from the nineteenth through the twentieth centuries. Existentialism is most apparent in Rosenblatt’s thought in her emphasis on the freedom of the individual, in recognising various tensions felt by young people in the mid-century United States, and in highlighting the need to make choices which have ethical consequences. Yet her interest in aesthetic experience and ways of connecting literary texts can also be read as existential, as Chapter 2 will show.

H.D., on the other hand, engaged openly and more extensively with existentialism in her work of the 1950s, than did Rosenblatt. For H.D., existentialism – especially Sartre’s French version – underscores the individuality of the human person in the face of contemporary urban life which seems to anonymise and objectify the human. For H.D. existentialism also emphasises the need to be jolted out of deadening habits of thought and patterns of living – in critiquing and being free of the status quo – to focus, to become more self-aware. H.D. also uses existentialism to modernise her romantic interest in passionate experience and the healing,

³⁹ Rosenblatt, *Reader, Text, Poem*, p. xiv.

transformative role of art. For H.D., wisdom is that which can lift the individual out of mental drudgery, to create new values to live by and new conceptions of beauty to enjoy. As with psychoanalysis, H.D. is hard to pin-down as an existentialist, in the sense that she does not subscribe to any one person's philosophy uncritically. As I say, it is better to see it as a 'vivifying' theme through her work. The amenability of existentialism and perhaps its strength for this thesis is its resistance to systematics and its preference for the microcosmic world of the individual, faced with responsibility to live in freedom and make wise choices.⁴⁰

Pathways to Wisdom

The existentialist emphasis which pervades this thesis, and which is reinforced by personalism, is indelibly concerned with the nature of the choices individuals might make, and thus with questions of wisdom. I explore wisdom in detail in Chapter 4, but at this stage it is sufficient to highlight the personalist way in which I interpret wisdom. I always couple wisdom with being in quest, with being on a journey of self-discovery and learning, growing in understanding of oneself, others, and more universal questions such as what it might mean to live a meaningful life. Because I want to emphasise the literary dimension of the thesis – that wisdom is a desirable telos of literary experience – I do not confront the complex concept of wisdom until the final chapter when I fold the insights of the previous three chapters into a discussion of how literary experience might be central to learners who are able and wish to position themselves in quest of wisdom in registered courses in English studies.

For Rosenblatt, wisdom is deeply connected to her emphasis on value selection – on the need for an individual to create his or her own philosophy of life by which to live, always subject to revision in the light of new experience. Rosenblatt's significance lies in her resistance

⁴⁰ For a congenial critique of existentialism, see Mary Warnock, *Existential Ethics* (London: Macmillan, 1967). Some existentialists, such as Heidegger, have been criticised for presenting existentialist ideas in a systematic form which undermines their existential nature.

to a knowledge-driven vision of literary studies, and moves more towards a pragmatic, life-based model, concerned with the growth of the human person in the context of a democracy. As I explore in Chapter 1, her seminal text, *Literature as Exploration*, is panoramic in its attention to the student's experience of literature in the context of his day-to-day life. Rosenblatt's theory of literary experience cannot, at least on the surface, be separated from her vision of the development of American citizens.

H.D. also scarcely uses the word 'wisdom', and when she does, it is never in a wholly positive way. It is something to be avoided as part and parcel of a patriarchal, proverbial tradition often associated with conventional, Western Christianity.⁴¹ Nevertheless, I maintain that the quest for wisdom is at the heart of H.D.'s work, particularly in her later period (1941-61). For H.D., wisdom is a mix of self-knowledge and intuition concerning some of the central existential problems of life, especially in the West. Her modernist revision of gender roles and sexuality feeds into her concern for re-evaluating relationships and seeking partnerships based on peace and harmony. H.D.'s modernist mythological revisionism, so imbricated in her sense of quest, is put in the service of such value creation, foregrounding prominent mythological women (including the Virgin Mary, Helen of Troy, and Isis) as alternate ontologies of feminine being.

The overarching emphasis on process and transformation in this thesis means that for Rosenblatt and H.D., a person is always *in quest* of wisdom. In fact, 'quest' is the best route into H.D.'s relationship toward wisdom, especially considering her disdain for its traditional, static conception of patriarchal dictates. While the *experience* of being in quest of wisdom is important to my thinkers, and part of their romantic heritage, it is never enough; there must always be some kind of goal, even if it is faint and indeterminate. In *The Walls Do Not Fall*

⁴¹ Nietzsche was an important influence on modernist distancing from traditional Christianity, and yet Nietzsche's view of Christianity must also be critiqued as partial and somewhat unhelpful. See Berdyaev, *The Destiny of Man*, pp. 114-115.

(1944) H.D. declares that '*we are voyagers, discoverers / of the not known*'; although we might not have a map which explains the meaning of life clearly, '*possibly we will reach haven, / heaven*' (see Chapter 3).⁴² During the 1940s the 'voyage' became a significant trope for H.D., and it is related to her spiritualist activity as well as her psychoanalysis with Sigmund Freud. H.D.'s conception of 'haven' and 'heaven' is intimately bound to the experience of journeying there. As such, it resonates with Rosenblatt's emphasis on the transactional literary experience as speaking to students' quests for meaning and direction in life. For Rosenblatt in particular, it was essential to make practical changes to the institutional running of literary studies – to make English a central discipline in personal and social development.

Even in her most theoretical work, *Reader, Text, Poem*, Rosenblatt incorporates substantial comment concerning her students' responses to literary works. Yet rather than seeing this fusion of theory with pedagogy as a stumbling block, invalidating Rosenblatt's status as a literary theorist, I read it as a strength and capitalise on this link. Although this thesis is intended as an intervention in literary theory, offering fresh readings of Rosenblatt and H.D., part of my intervention is to highlight the need to be more explicit about pedagogy when discussing questions of literary theory. And although H.D. pursued her career outside university structures, her personal project of learning is especially amenable to strengthening certain of Rosenblatt's insights. H.D. recalls our attention to the experience of learning, and how aesthetic experience can energise a project of becoming. She prevents growth in wisdom from becoming a systematic course with easily measurable outcomes, and yet she also prevents wisdom from being something remote and thus unsuitable for university study.

By foregrounding issues of learning in literary studies within a theoretical context, I am positioning this work alongside others in Britain who are turning to pedagogy as an integral

⁴² H.D., *Collected Poems 1912-1944*, ed. Louis L. Martz (New York: New Directions, 1983), p. 543, original italics.

part of envisioning English studies for the future. In Britain, Ben Knights and Peter Abbs are two scholars who have consistently tried to close the gap between literary theory and education. Abbs's *English Within the Arts: A Radical Alternative for English and the Arts in the Curriculum* (1982) and Ben Knights' and Chris Thurgar-Dawson's *Active Reading: Transformative Writing in Literary Studies* (2006) are representative texts from different historical moments that connect developments in literary theory and literary history to the experience of learning English at various educational levels. Knights's most recent and summative book, *Pedagogic Criticism: Reconfiguring University English Studies* (2017) foregrounds literary studies as 'practice', and how such a framing can suggest alternative ways of learning – learning through teaching texts and learning through reading texts. In *Active Reading* Knights references Rosenblatt, although he and Thurgar-Dawson choose to situate their congenial approach in a more eclectic matrix of influences.⁴³ Nevertheless, their emphasis on transformation and the creative activity of reading and writing leads into discussion of pedagogy, as it does for Rosenblatt.

A decision to include pedagogical issues in a work of literary theory is ultimately a methodological one, but it is also an evaluative commitment – a belief in the wisdom of relating critical approaches back to the institutional learning contexts in which they are often carried out. This is a useful reminder that methodology is never innocent – a way to get from A to B. As Rosenblatt would have said, critical methodology is a selective activity situated in a broader decision-making process concerning what is and is not valuable for a specific course of action. Methodology is thus also a pathway to wisdom, of choosing one path over another, a way of materialising deeper commitments.

⁴³ Ben Knights and Chris-Thurgar Dawson, *Active Reading: Transformative Writing in Literary Studies* (London: Continuum, 2008).

Research Questions

The central questions which this thesis seeks to answer are as follows. How can the quest for wisdom in English studies find institutional sanction as well as intersect with pressing concerns in literary theory? How can the theory of the transactional literary experience be developed so that it provides a critical method suitable for those in quest of wisdom? Finally, which approaches and theoretical frameworks can be drawn upon in order to situate the transactional literary experience in a broader pedagogical vision?

Methodology

Primarily a work of literary theory, this dissertation constructs a dialogic conversation between two thinkers in order to offer a personalist contribution to re-configuring English studies for the future. Born from the ongoing synthetic dialogue which is central to this thesis, my contribution can be summarised as follows: by re-conceptualising and re-affirming the importance of the individual and her experience, I create a framework for exploring the question of literary contexts, moving away from dominant historicist understandings of context towards a personalist understanding of what I term ‘textual sociability’, after a reflection by Rita Felski on the value of context. I locate personalist textual sociability as being central to the transactional literary experience, as a process which foregrounds the role of imagination for growth in self-knowledge and understanding of others, leading to wisdom. By drawing attention to the ways in which Rosenblatt and H.D. draw upon discourses of romanticism, modernism, and existentialism, I am able to frame my contribution as personalist because of personalism’s ability to connect such disparate domains as philosophical anthropology, epistemology, and sociology. In other words: the thesis is structured by showing how a particular anthropology (idea of the human and his experience) leads to a particular philosophy

(conception of knowledge in relation to literary experience), which in turn implies a particular sociology, or vision of human relations.

Each chapter helps to develop my line of argument by exploring various synergies between Rosenblatt and H.D, while acknowledging important differences. Significantly, this thesis is not an exercise in literary history or textual scholarship. I am preoccupied with developing a theory of literary experience and its relationship to wisdom, by means of exploring the ways in which Rosenblatt and H.D. approach these topics, because I consider these thinkers to be the most rewarding when brought together for this purpose. Indeed, there is an argument to be made that in developing a personalist theory of literary experience and the quest for wisdom, I am also modelling a personalist method. In my discussion I consistently read H.D. alongside Rosenblatt and vice versa, and I utilise the intuitive connections which emerged during this process. Indeed, I may be so bold as to suggest that I am the principal adhesive link between these two thinkers; there are three of us in this intellectual partnership, and this thesis was born of my own transactions with H.D.'s and Rosenblatt's writing. And so I engage closely with specific texts by these authors, and therefore also contribute to criticism on such texts.

H.D.'s entire oeuvre could conceivably be read as demonstrating her interest in learning. Yet with a few exceptions, I focus on H.D.'s prose and poetry from the 1940s. During the Second World War she experienced a renaissance in her creativity and it was during these years that she engaged most intensively in spiritualism, the occult, mystical experiences, and other discourses which she harnessed for her learning.⁴⁴ Her poetry and prose are also closely intertwined, so generic distinctions are less important as they were in previous decades, where the H.D. of her poetry and the H.D. of her autobiographical novels were more distinct.

⁴⁴ For a phasing of H.D.'s career, see Matte Robinson and Demetres P. Tryphonopoulos, 'Introduction' in H.D., *The Hirslanden Notebooks*, ed. by Matte Robinson and Demetres P. Tryphonopoulos (Victoria, BC: ELS, 2015), pp. ix-xxix, pp. xiv-xxv.

There are, however, certain texts by H.D. that I have excluded from this study on purpose. *Hermetic Definition*, written at the end of H.D.'s life, explores her relationship to various men in the late 1950s who had an impact on her self-identity as a wise woman, which is also affirmed in *Bid Me to Live*. *Hermetic Definition* is a difficult, obtuse poem with complex symbolic references; it is more fitting to read it within H.D.'s religious experience rather than her preoccupation with aesthetic experience. On the other hand, I include texts of the 1950s which relate to H.D.'s engagement with the existential psychoanalyst Erich Heydt, such as *Magic Mirror*. The organising principle has been selecting those texts from outside the 1940s which do the most to frame the impulse toward quest during and after the Second World War. Texts which anticipate this quest are included, whereas those which concern themes which are more peripheral to this study (such as film, religion, sexuality, and family history) are excluded.

Rosenblatt's output is somewhat easier to navigate, simply because it is so much smaller than H.D.'s even though it extends across eighty years. I have endeavoured to embrace her entire corpus, which begins with the editorial comments for *The Barnard Bulletin* in the early 1920s, and ends in 2005 with her collected volume of essays, *Making Meaning with Texts*. Although Rosenblatt developed her thought over her long life, there are distinct lines of continuity from her earliest publications to her last, which make it advisable to seek a panoramic perspective. But again, if there is a concentric circle of Rosenblatt texts in this thesis, then *Literature as Exploration* and *Reader, Text, Poem* lie at its heart.

During the 1980s and 1990s Rosenblatt also participated in a number of interviews, which are extremely helpful in understanding the development and phases of her career. I am especially indebted to the 1982 interview for Columbia University, conducted by Ed Erwin, which is still housed in Columbia's university archives. I have also drawn upon unpublished material in H.D.'s archive, at Yale University. But unlike other studies on H.D., this thesis is not an archive-intensive one; there is more than enough primary-source material in her

published books, particularly given the spate of posthumous publications of her later writing in the last ten years or so.

Moreover, while H.D. and Rosenblatt are the core pair of thinkers in my thesis, at times I engage a number of other discourses and thinkers in order to illuminate aspects of my core dialogue. Indeed, both Rosenblatt and H.D. themselves are expansive in their intellectual and aesthetic range, drawing on multiple discourses (cognitive science, philosophy, psychoanalysis, spiritualism, psychology, and politics) in order to enhance their own particular vision. There is something significant about this multidisciplinary, eclectic approach which arguably does intellectual work by its very presence. As the editors of the Lindisfarne Library of Russian Philosophy have said of Russian thought: it 'is broad and individualistic, bearing within it many different perspectives – religious, metaphysical, erotic, social, and apocalyptic'.⁴⁵ This thesis is not a contribution to Russian philosophy. However, because I adopt a personalist framework with which I draw together the various threads, there is something in this 'Russian', eclectic approach to thought which speaks of my own position, and which surfaces throughout the four chapters. But before I offer a chapter outline, I shall explain my key terms as they are used throughout the thesis.

Definition of Terms

Personalism relates to the thesis's overarching framework, whereby it denotes attention to the concrete person and his or interpersonal growth. Personalism is more interested in specific individuals than broader ideas about persisting traits in humankind, as in humanism. Moreover, personalism differs from *individualism*, which tends to see the individual's rights as inalienable. In this thesis individualism stems from humanistic ideas about the self-sufficiency

⁴⁵ Aleksei Khomiakov and Ivan Kireevsky, *On Spiritual Unity: A Slavophile Reader*, eds. Boris Jakim and Robert Bird (Hudson, NY: Lindisfarne Books, 1998), p. 368.

of the individual. By contrast, personalism sees the person's growth in the context of interpersonal relationships.

Romanticism and *existentialism* refer to broad areas of focus and sympathy among the various thinkers whose work is explored in this thesis. Although they intersect specific, historic movements, such as German Romanticism and French existentialism, it is not these movements which are given attention in this project. Romanticism denotes particular interest in subjectivity (feelings, emotions, and passions) and the complexity of human experiences. Existentialism is concerned with the inner world of persons and is an axiological principle, insisting that humans act out of freedom and create values by which to live.

Modernism, by contrast, relates to a specific historical literary movement, dating roughly between 1890 and 1940, although in H.D.'s case, 'long modernism' is a more apt term to describe her aesthetic, but modernism will be used in a flexible sense, to include works written by H.D. after 1940. In this thesis, modernist elements include the quest as an undertaking in the wake of individual and social breakdown, and the indeterminacy of generic boundaries.

Pragmatics and *warranted assertability* relate specifically to Rosenblatt's philosophical influences and how she developed her thought along pragmatist lines. Rosenblatt is most obviously indebted to pragmatist philosophers such as John Dewey, William James, and Charles Sanders Peirce. Pragmatism complements personalism in its interest in concrete situations individuals encounter, and the exercise of knowledge in such situations. Warranted assertability concerns Rosenblatt's attempt to explain the dynamics of validity of interpretation: is an interpretation warranted by the way textual symbols are presented in a text?

Similarly, *the transactional literary experience* refers to Rosenblatt's transactional theory of the literary work, whereby she described aesthetic experiences with literature by drawing upon the transactional philosophy of John Dewey and Arthur F. Bentley. *Personalist*

textual sociability, by contrast, is my own term, which I develop in Chapter 2 as a way of describing the way texts can be brought together in an existential way.

Finally, *wisdom* refers to that tentative goal of transactional literary experiences as they are explored in English studies, denoting increased insight into oneself, other personalities, and some of the central existential issues concerning human beings more generally. Wisdom is a multifaceted phenomenon which balances practical and more philosophical concerns.

Structure

Chapter 1 examines the concepts of ‘individual’ and ‘experience’ in the work of my two thinkers. This chapter prepares the ground for the more theoretical chapters that follow. I contextualise Rosenblatt’s and H.D.’s interest in the individual and his or her experience and show how this manifests in specific works – *Paint it Today*, *HERmione*, and *Literature as Exploration* – as well as folding their separate interests into a coherent personalist vision. I focus this interest in the individual within the context of learning, thus channelling this broad interest into a factor that will be significant throughout the rest of the thesis.

Chapter 2 develops a theory of personalist textual sociability by extending Chapter 1’s interest in the individual’s experience by applying it directly to literary experience. I build on Rita Felski’s notion of a text’s ‘sociability’ to show how Rosenblatt and H.D. present material for a personalist understanding of textual sociability, which privileges associational modes of consciousness in the literary experience and the subsequent work of thinking about literary experiences. While never subsiding into pure subjectivism, the personalist angle of textual sociability is controlled by reference to the overall transactional nature of literary experience, which posits warranted assertability as a way of concentrating on the text-reader dyad. In this chapter I engage in close reading of Rosenblatt’s theory in *Reader, Text, Poem*, and *Making Meaning with Texts* and H.D.’s associational consciousness in *The Sword Went Out to Sea* and

her interest in associations more generally in *The Mystery*. These close readings form the crucible out of which a theory of personalist textual sociability can emerge. I finally show how my theory of textual sociability impacts actual learning situations, by drawing on the work of Rosenblatt's colleague, Gordon Pradl.

Chapter 3 further explores the link between personalist textual sociability and overcoming differences in human experience to find commonalities. I explore how Rosenblatt and H.D. – in *Literature as Exploration*, 'The Greek Boy', *The Walls Do Not Fall* and Rosenblatt's essay, 'Whitman's *Democratic Vistas*' – channel imaginative identification with others in literary experience as the basis for creating new patterns of human relations in society. In the second half of the chapter, I show how both thinkers translate this connection between literary experience and human relations into a new social role for the learner who writes about this link for an audience.

Chapter 4 folds the previous discussion of literary experiences and their potential impact into a discussion of what it means to be in quest of wisdom in institutional English studies today. Both 'quest' and 'wisdom' are carefully explored in relation to both Rosenblatt's and H.D.'s trajectory, and as operational concepts in a personalist pedagogy. At this stage, I draw on a number of other thinkers such as Maxine Greene, Nicholas Maxwell, Roger Walsh – some directly related to Rosenblatt, and some who are less directly connected – in order to place my discussion in a contemporary context of revived interest in literary humanism, affect, and ethics, and thus crystallise my contribution to English studies.

1. The Importance of the Individual's Experience

It has been said that for personalists, the individual is the key to reality.¹ Not only is the person considered the pinnacle of existence, she is also the ground from which knowledge arises: the human being is a microcosm. As Jan Olof Bengtsson states, quoting J. H. Lavelly, personality is 'the fundamental explanatory principle' for personalists.² What this means for this thesis is that a focus on the individual and his experience needs to come before any further consideration of literary experience and wisdom. As I shall argue, Louise Rosenblatt and H.D. were especially preoccupied with the individual and with the nature of his experience, and this also forms the basis for their subsequent explorations into literary experience and learning.

Rosenblatt grew up on a diet of romantic, libertarian, and anti-authoritarian literature which defended the individual's right to develop as a person. H.D., on the other hand, staked out her originality within the modernist moment by experimenting with presentations of personal experience. Over the course of her career, Rosenblatt became steadily more focused on the fortunes of the student in American institutions of higher education; her interest in the individual's experience therefore became centred on the student's experiences and how these might be brought to bear on literary study.

By contrast, H.D.'s failure to succeed at college-level English studies intensified her commitment to carving out her own, distinctive exploration of (particularly female) personal experience. Her autobiographical novels of the 1920s, especially *Paint it Today* (written 1921) and *HERmione* (written 1927) experiment with points of view and situate the individual's experience within the body, approximating Simone de Beauvoir's existentialist concept of the 'body as situation'. While H.D.'s method was somewhat intuitive and deeply personal, by the

¹ Jan Olof Bengtsson, *The Worldview of Personalism: Origins and Early Development* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 67.

² Ibid.

1960s Rosenblatt had developed a very specific theory of human experience, which proceeded from her prior commitment to the individual (born of different intellectual heritages): namely, the transactional theory of being, adapted from John Dewey's and Arthur F. Bentley's *Knowing and the Known* (1949).

In this chapter I explore the ways in which Rosenblatt and H.D. framed their commitment to the individual and her experience, and how this lays the foundation for a more specific interest in the personal nature of the transactional literary experience, to be explored in Chapter 2. I move from an exploration of 'experience' (as primarily existential in the case of H.D., and primarily transactional in the case of Rosenblatt), to a discussion of Rosenblatt's and H.D.'s particular commitments to 'the individual' – commitments nurtured in specific, personal contexts. The inclusion of biographical material in this and the third chapter serves to demonstrate the arc of my thinkers' work, and to foreground lines of continuity amidst various changes in genre and focus. Moreover, the neuroscientific component of this chapter prefigures that in Chapter 4, where the task is to emphasise the ways in which assumptions about wisdom are being confirmed and strengthened by neuroscientific research.

The central premise in this chapter is that a personalist discourse of literary study rests on a particular philosophical anthropology – a view of human nature. I will now explore my thinkers' various understandings of human experience, and draw some parallels between them.

Towards a Transactional Theory of Experience

Being in *Paint it Today*

H.D.'s autobiographical writing is the best place to assess how she envisaged human experience. *Paint it Today* (written 1921) was her first substantial attempt at prose writing; it inaugurated over a decade of emotionally wrought autobiographical prose. Indeed, H.D. claimed in 1925 that 'the things I write are all indirectly (when not directly) inspired by my

experiences'.³ Of the 'Madrigal' cycle of prose fiction, which includes *Asphodel* (written 1921-22), *HERmione* (written 1927), *Bid Me to Live* (1960), and arguably other novels as well, such as *Palimpsest* (1927) and *Pilate's Wife* (written 1928), *Paint it Today* is perhaps the most readable, the most direct and the least hampered by over-determined craftsmanship. Robert Spoo even refers to *HERmione* and *Asphodel* as the 'Her-Asphodel sequence', pointing out that *HERmione* was written as a prequel to *Asphodel*.⁴ Although *Asphodel*'s composition is actually closer to *Paint it Today*'s, the only surviving manuscript of *Asphodel* is likely to have been a revised version, written around 1926-27 'as an aesthetically consistent sequel to *Her*'.⁵ As such, *Paint it Today* reads differently to the other Madrigal novels, with important formal differences that make the relationship between the individual and her experiences all the more potent.

Cassandra Laity has argued that *Paint it Today* is evidence of H.D.'s interest in romanticism, particularly Swinburne's androgynous 'sister love'.⁶ In my reading of *Paint it Today*, however, I contend that H.D.'s depiction of the novel's heroine, Midget Defreddie, also approximates an existential vision of human being as situated in the body. As I noted in the Introduction and explore more fully in Chapter 4, in her later years H.D. actively engaged with the existentialism of Jean-Paul Sartre, but as a broader approach to human existence, *Paint it Today* certainly anticipates some of the more explicit visions which twentieth-century French existentialists such as de Beauvoir and Merleau-Ponty formulated some decades later. It is, however, Toril Moi's *What is a Woman?* (2001) which draws out the implications of de Beauvoir's thought with clarity and verve, to which I turn to analyse Midget's experience in

³ Quoted in Robert Spoo, 'Introduction' in H.D., *Asphodel*, ed. Robert Spoo (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1992), pp. ix-xxi, p. xi.

⁴ Ibid., p. xiii.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Cassandra Laity, 'Lesbian Romanticism: H.D.'s Fictional Representations of Frances Gregg and Bryher' in H.D., *Paint it Today*, ed. Cassandra Laity (New York: New York University Press, 1992), pp. xvii-xliiii.

Paint it Today. Viewed in the light of ‘body as situation’, I suggest that H.D.’s autobiographical writing, *Paint it Today*, also anticipates Rosenblatt’s transactional theory of being. Although transactional theory and existentialism are separate modes of thought, they have much in common in their attempt to break down the subject-object, Cartesian dualism of older ways of conceiving human experience, and create something more holistic, more personal.

In *Paint it Today* painting is a metaphor for writing, or ‘painting with words’, to echo Flannery O’Connor.⁷ H.D. uses a number of other verbs to describe this activity, such as ‘etching’ and ‘carving’.⁸ The product is variously a ‘picture’, ‘painting’, or an ‘etching’ (3-6). Often these nouns are followed by a question mark, evoking a tone of insecurity on the part of the one doing the painting to do it with any degree of accuracy (3-5). But by claiming that the picture is ‘that of being’, both process and product are situated in a state of flux (6). ‘Being’ might refer to a human being – a girl ‘sitting in the grass, this Midget’ – but it also suggests an ongoing, present continuous activity that is not yet completed (6). To understand being as a continuous reality causes Midget to be viewed first as ‘unborn’, and subsequently as an individual who unfolds like a ‘hatched bird’ (6). The natural imagery with which H.D. envelopes Midget further underscores the dynamic relationship Midget has with her environment. The young Midget sits in the grass rather than on it, and ‘crawls’ into a rabbit hutch with ‘elbows scraping the rough lathes’ (4). Midget has an impact on her surroundings at the same time as her surroundings influence her.

When the novel’s action shifts to Europe and explores Midget’s travels with her friend, Josepha, Midget’s assessment of people’s relationship to their environment deepens. Situated on the beach at Etaples in France, Midget considers her relationship to the ‘trailing herd’ of Americans and Europeans she sees (15). Rather than being a comment on these people –

⁷ Jolly Kay Sharp, *‘Between the House and the Chicken Yard’: The Masks of Mary Flannery O’Connor* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2011), p. 128. I am grateful to Becky Cullen for pointing this echo out to me.

⁸ H.D., *Paint it Today*, pp. 5-6. Further references to this text are given in parentheses in the main body.

looking like a 'herd' – I would argue that H.D.'s language indicates something about the way Midget is perceiving other people; the focus is on Midget rather than the walkers on the beach. The beginning of the chapter describes 'the wind against an old hulk on the sands below Etaples', and the 'trailing herd' is set against the backdrop of a sunset that seems to 'smother' (15). In spite of the haziness of sight, Midget declares that 'these and others, trailing in leisurely procession, were surely people, authentic realities' (15). Rather than making an objective statement about these people, Midget is trying to understand the individual's relation to others within a total situation, contingent on time and place – the smothering sunset and the wind against an old hulk. The bracketing out of 'authentic as paper dolls, cut out front and back, matched front and back' seems to be a description of Midget's thought processes, intruding, as it were, into the narrative which then returns more positively after this to 'each a reality, an individual' (15). Describing those she sees as 'paper dolls' is a tentative expression of perception for Midget, one which quivers between adjectives that distance people and merge them into a 'herd', and words which tend to foreground their individuality, or their 'differentiated' status (15).

The conclusion that Midget arrives at – 'that was it' – is insignificant compared to the overall meditation on human experience and perception of that experience, which seems to see experience as dynamic – as an event in time which changes both perceiver and perceived (15). When the author declares that 'language and tradition do not make a people, but the heat that presses on them, the cold that baffles them, the alternating lengths of night and day', this is a vision of human experience particular to Midget's developing sense of what experience might entail (15). Language and tradition are of course important, but 'the cold that baffles' and the 'alternating lengths' of time are different phrasings of the same understanding of how people are 'made' and then re-made in contingent and shifting contexts. Midget's conclusion is a rejection of static conceptions of identity and experience in favour of something more fluid.

Part of H.D.'s attention to Midget's experience and understanding of experience in *Paint it Today* is closely connected to the overall feminist direction of the novel, which tells the story of a young woman of late-nineteenth-century middle-class suburban background freeing herself from the constraints imposed on her. The European tour becomes a site of resistance for Midget, whose body and those of other women are foregrounded as a way of overcoming the silences Midget feels to be imposed on women in her home environment. Of the French existentialists, Maurice Merleau-Ponty is perhaps the most well-known philosopher to focus on embodied experience. His concept of the 'lived body' is meant to overcome the Cartesian split between mind and body. He writes that 'the union of soul and body is not an amalgamation between two mutually external terms, subject and object, brought about by arbitrary degree. It is enacted at every instant in the moment of existence'.⁹ Merleau-Ponty is aware that such moments of existence are often pre-conceptual; human beings have an 'intentional arc which projects round about us our past, our future, our human setting'.¹⁰ The 'intentional arc' helps us to live and move and have our being in a quietly composed way, aware of the familiar which enables us to exist, structure, and carry out day-to-day, habitual activities. Of course, frequently our habitual 'structures', as Merleau-Ponty calls our 'sedimented' intentional arc in *The Structure of Behavior* (1942), are challenged by new experiences. Not only are Midget's intentional arc and habitual structures transformed during her European excursion, they are transformed by a will on her part. And this is why Toril Moi's analysis of Simone de Beauvoir's concept of 'body as situation' is especially relevant here. Moi stresses de Beauvoir's interest in how people – especially women – come to understand themselves as an embodied situation, as being beyond determinacies. This understanding may then enable women to take control of their lives in a more meaningful fashion.

⁹ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962), pp. 88-89.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 135-36.

The basic claim that Moi makes with regard to de Beauvoir's thought is that, as with Merleau-Ponty's vision of 'lived body', the notion of 'body as situation' erodes subject / object dualism. Moi uses de Beauvoir's concept in order to offer a workable understanding of female subjectivity for twenty-first century readers with a residual knowledge of American poststructuralist thought, particularly Judith Butler's. Use of the existentialist concept of 'lived experience' in this context presupposes that, contrary to Butler's thought in *Bodies That Matter* (1993), we do indeed have a ground to existence, and that the body (independent of its socialisation) is that ground. While it does not follow that the body determines the nature of human being, it does follow that the body profoundly affects it, constituting limitations as well as possibilities. In short, humans experience through the body. 'Perceived as part of lived experience', writes Moi, 'the body is a style of being, an intonation, a specific way of being present in the world', which also has 'specific physical properties'.¹¹ Being is personal in the fullest sense, proceeding from our bodies.

It could, of course, be argued that animals also experience through their bodies, in which case what is different about humans? While also deploring Cartesian dualism and emphasising the reality of the body, Berdyaev's personalism would temper emphasis on the body by recalling the spiritual nature of bodies – not as a split or divide, but as something at the very depths of human being which reveals our connection to the divine – however this may be envisaged.¹² On this model, to experience the world through our bodies should be a profoundly spiritual experience, wherein humans are neither subordinated to matter nor are

¹¹ Toril Moi, *What is a Woman?* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 65.

¹² See Nicolas Berdyaev, *Freedom and the Spirit*, trans. Oliver Fielding Clarke (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1948), pp. 1-51. On connection to the divine, see Michel Alexander Vallon, *An Apostle of Freedom: Life and Teachings of Nicolas Berdyaev* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1960), pp. 195-210.

they elevated above it. There is a transactional dynamism between body and spirit, wherein growth in wisdom would also entail a greater sense of coherence between body and spirit.¹³

Although *Paint it Today* is peppered with references to Midget's body and that of others (the Hermaphrodite in the Louvre and her friend Althea, for example), one instance will suffice for discussion, because it is a substantial one that preoccupies the narrator over a number of pages. Standing as a young child in a 'little flat in Chelsea' with her mother, Midget tries to tell her that she, Midget, should have become more independent much sooner (39). The narrator articulates this experience through drawing attention to the intermingling of emotional and physical sensations. Images of existential correspondence, such as the aristocratic lady climbing the steps to the guillotine, Orestes under physical stress when holding a knife to his mother Clytemnestra's throat, and a man drowning, underscore the bodily situation Midget is experiencing (40, 42). The effect of refracting Midget's story of lived experience through the bodily immediacy of her particular present moment strengthens her cry 'you are tyrannizing me. You are hurting me' (42). By the end of the scene, Midget sobs and sees herself on the floor: 'She might have been fifteen and all the ten years, her years, yet to live. All the ten years her mind was clamouring for' (44).

The strain that Midget feels – the 'clamouring' that she senses in herself – can be read as a strength; it means that she is deeply engaged in the situation, and with the evaluative thinking it is calling forth. The thinking materialises in a 'little speech' that she has rehearsed in her mind 'for the last few feverish nights' (40). Instead of 'submitting' to geometry and conversation with 'all the girls you chose for me as friends', Midget believes that she would have been better off had she 'gone away from home when [she] was fifteen, into a shop; hats, dressmakers, assistant, anything, anything' (40). Speech comes to Midget here as 'a hot wave

¹³ For an exploration of what 'spirit' is and means, especially in a twentieth-century context, see Nicolas Berdyaev, *Spirit and Reality*, trans. George Reavey (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1946), pp. 33-47.

across her brain' (40). Thoughts rise in her mind 'clearer, sharper, more intense and crushing as the anythings crowded faster and faster, with more and more fury, upon each other's heels – "anything, I should have known, rather than stay at home"' (40-41). A tussle between emotion and reason characterises this process. By drawing attention to her body, Midget is claiming one form of resistance to her mother as an individual person, even if she feels she has failed at other forms of resistance (not leaving home before). While consciousness of her body may have been more muted in her younger years, Midget recognises it as a situation, as the ground of her being through which she engages with the world in a conscious, dynamic fashion.

In fact, Midget's thought processes, which are depicted so viscerally, are consistent with some of the findings of current neuroscientific research, which tries to describe the ways in which humans deal with difficult situations, and possibly move toward some kind of resolution, or what Merleau-Ponty might have called, a 'transformed structure'. When deciding whether or not one 'should' do something, the thought processes that accompany this decision can sometimes feel like 'a hot wave across the brain'.¹⁴ Synthesising discourses pertinent to literature on wisdom and moral philosophy, Stephen S. Hall has drawn attention to the exploratory link between physical repulsion and moral indignation.¹⁵ 'Emotions like repugnance', writes Hall, 'are wonderful teachers and guides, informing us at the unconscious but felt level about what is right and what is wrong'.¹⁶ Midget's struggle consists of trying to control the emotion that threatens to overwhelm her and which eventually does: 'It was then that Margaret stamped. It was then that Midget exploded' (43). Why might Midget's mother's reference to 'blue or pink forget-me-nots for Sissie's bonnet' cause Midget to 'stamp' the ground, especially when the bonnet is held to Midget's face (43)? According to Hall's understanding, it is possible that her protest at inspecting the bonnet is a somatic manifestation

¹⁴ Stephen S. Hall, *Wisdom: From Philosophy to Neuroscience* (New York: Knopf, 2010), p. 104.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 104.

of Midget's accumulating distress at trying to tell her mother an emotional truth about herself. While more objective moral reasoning employs parts of the brain (such as the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex) associated with cognitive 'impersonal' deliberation, the incorporation of loved-ones into the moral decision-making process tenses one's reflection, so that the 'rational part of the human brain must override occasionally conflicting moral evaluations from the emotional part of the brain [such as the medial prefrontal cortex] in order to reach the kind of abstract decisions that promise the greatest benefit', for others as well as for oneself.¹⁷ When Midget therefore tells her mother, 'you are tyrannizing me. You are hurting me', this has double significance (43). The statement refers to Midget's overall feeling of oppression and need to escape. But the statement also refers to the pressure Midget feels to keep her mother happy. Deciding what one 'ought' or 'should' do (or have done), especially in such an emotional context of close, familial relationships, is a process 'achieved by exhaustive, excruciatingly deep reflection and deliberation' (109). It is a process which leaves Midget 'defeated' (44).

Inclusion of scientific evidence relating to decision-making process underscores and makes clear the ways in which the body is active in human experience, especially intense experiences which cause us to re-evaluate what we think and feel about a given person, topic, problem, and so on. *Paint it Today*, as a representative example of H.D.'s voluminous autobiographical prose writing, presents personal experience as a site of potential transformation and, for women, resistance to determinacies which may lead to a feeling of oppression and even of wasted opportunity. H.D. politicises human experience by focusing on female interiority, and as such her autobiographical writing can be placed beside other female modernist autobiographical writing that attempts similar embodied moves, such as Dorothy Richardson's *Pilgrimage* (1938) and Virginia Woolf's *Moments of Being* (written 1907-36). H.D.'s autobiographical impetus, which resurfaces throughout this thesis, is always intensely

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 110.

personal: her fictional persona's body is not just a site for experience, which is also true of animals, but something connected to her evolving sense of personality.

While H.D. never engaged with the transactional theory of twentieth-century American pragmatism, it is easy to see how her representation of human experience at least approximates to transactional theory, especially given her amenability to existentialist conceptions of experience and the body. And although twentieth-century existentialism and pragmatism are separate schools of thought (in separate countries, France and the United States), Rosenblatt's adoption of transactional theory at the same time as exploring the existentialism of Sartre indicates that, at least in this instance, H.D.'s vision of human experience, which I have argued is sympathetic to the existentialism of Sartre's associates, de Beauvoir and Merleau-Ponty, can be folded into more explicitly transactional understandings.

The Rationale for the Transactional Theory of Experience

In her 1978 theoretical work, *The Reader, the Text, the Poem: The Transactional Theory of the Literary Work*, Rosenblatt declared that she was influenced in the development of her transactional position by the existentialism in the 'early literary works of Malraux and Sartre'.¹⁸ She is not explicit about the nature of this influence, other than, as I noted in the Introduction, that these works by Malraux and Sartre 'strengthened certain of [her] emphases'.¹⁹ By the fourth edition of her seminal text, *Literature as Exploration* (1983), Rosenblatt used the word 'existential' in the sense of being an oppositional stance among adolescents toward 'the Establishment'.²⁰ Implicit in Rosenblatt's references to existentialism in the 1970s and 1980s is a concern for young people's responsibility for creating a society befitting a democracy,

¹⁸ Louise M. Rosenblatt, *The Reader, the Text, the Poem: The Transactional Theory of the Literary Work*, paperback ed. (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1994), p. xiv.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Louise M. Rosenblatt, *Literature as Exploration*, 4th ed. (New York: MLA, 1983), p. 83. See below for a discussion of the various editions of this text.

where each person takes responsibility for his own existence, and automatic acceptance of the status quo is discouraged.

Rather than drawing more extensively on twentieth-century French existentialism, however, Rosenblatt chose to build her theoretical approach to reading on the transactional model. Although she states that ‘transaction’ was (implicitly) ‘already present’ in her 1938 edition of *Literature as Exploration*, it was not until the 1980s, after the publication of *Reader, Text, Poem* that ‘transaction’ appears with any degree of frequency in her work.²¹ In the 1980s and 1990s Rosenblatt produced a number of essays and interviews that employ ‘transaction’ and emphasise its usefulness in articulating her theory of reading. The largest and most significant interview is *The Reminiscences of Louise Michelle Rosenblatt* (conducted by Ed Erwin in 1982), and the most valuable essays: ‘Viewpoints: Transaction Versus Interaction – A Terminological Rescue Operation’ (1985), and ‘The Transactional Theory of Reading and Writing’ (1994), both of which are reprinted in the ‘Theory’ section of Rosenblatt’s *Making Meaning with Texts: Selected Essays* (2005).²² The fifth edition of *Literature as Exploration* (1995), which includes the essay ‘Retrospect and Prospect’, also belongs in this cluster of writings that explore the ramifications of ‘transaction’. Finally, although Rosenblatt acknowledges the psychoanalytic school of transactionalism, which was developed in the late 1950s by Eric Berne, her use of this term in relation to experience is distinguished by its political overtones and removal from the psychoanalytic framework, espousing the freedom of the individual from authoritarian and institutional oppression.²³

²¹ Louise M. Rosenblatt, *Literature as Exploration*, 5th ed. (New York: MLA, 1995), p. 291.

²² Additional pieces include ‘Literature – SOS!’, *Language Arts*, 68 (1991): 444-448; ‘The Literary Transaction: Evocation and Response’, *Theory into Practice*, 21 (1982): 268-277; Nicholas J. Karolides, ‘Theory and Practice: An Interview with Louise M. Rosenblatt’, *Language Arts*, 77 (1999): 158-170; Eugene F. Provenzo Jr., ‘Louise Rosenblatt Interview’, School of Education, University of Miami. 14 March 1999. <http://www.education.miami.edu/ep/rosenblatt/> (accessed online, June 17 2015).

²³ Rosenblatt, *Reminiscences*, p. 325.

Rosenblatt places the emergence of transactional frames of human experience as part of a wider, twentieth-century paradigm shift in how scientists conceive of being, away from the dualisms of Descartes and his ‘view of the self as distinct to the world around us’.²⁴ Appropriating the terminology of Dewey’s and Bentley’s *Knowing and the Known* (1949), for Rosenblatt ‘transaction’ consisted of the alternative view that ‘the knower, the knowing, and the known are seen as aspects of “one process.” Each element conditions and is conditioned by the other in a mutually constituted situation’ (3). The shift that Dewey and Bentley made in their book was away from ‘interaction’, which represented an older way of conceiving human being in the world, which placed stress on a static nature of people and the environment, and towards ‘transaction’.

While pointing out that Dewey had been thinking along transactional lines since the 1890s, Rosenblatt appreciates the significance of the terminological transition because it crystallises the ethical consequences of choosing one term over another (41, 39). ‘Interaction’ in her writing is associated with dualisms, stasis, objectivity, and impersonalism; ‘transaction’, on the other hand, is more ‘organic’ and postulates a ‘living organism’ (40). In addition to carrying overtones of Coleridgean romanticism, Rosenblatt felt that the transactional ‘living organism’ is a concept amenable to ecologists, where the emphasis is placed on the individual’s situated position as ‘part of nature, continuously in transaction with an environment’, wherein each conditions the other moment by moment, as part of a ‘total situation’ (3, 40). ‘Nature’ should be read in this instance as a metaphor for the broader environment, for one’s habitat, as well as denoting the natural world of plants and animals.²⁵

²⁴ Louise Rosenblatt, *Making Meaning with Texts: Selected Essays* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2005), p. 2. Further references to this text are given in parentheses in the main body.

²⁵ Rosenblatt never drew upon ecocriticism, although her understanding of ‘environment’ echoes ecocriticism’s interest in the relationship between nature and culture. See Greg Gerrard (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Ecocriticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

I believe that Rosenblatt was particularly attracted to the transactional approach because it offered her a clear way out of the kind of scientific thinking she was engaged in during the 1930s, while also being amenable to theoretical clarity, and thus the new theory presented her with a gentle departure from her social scientific studies. While working as an instructor in English at Barnard College from 1928 to 1938 Rosenblatt undertook further graduate work, this time in anthropology, working under the guidance of renowned anthropologists Franz Boas and Ruth Benedict, and benefiting from her friendship and intermittent cohabitation with Margaret Mead. Boas and Benedict appear in Rosenblatt's 1938 *Literature as Exploration* as methodological exemplars, as people who pioneered an ethnographic approach to the study of other cultures, as well as those who advocated a tolerant approach to human differences. For Rosenblatt, the anthropological method of Boas, Benedict, and Mead offered a scientific method for thinking about students' experiences with literature – with the ways in which students encountered human relations in an anthropological way during the literary experience. By turning to Dewey's transactional theory, Rosenblatt was able to deepen her theoretical approach and attend to her political concerns at the same time as retaining a mildly scientific stance which avoided what she believed to be the excesses of analytic philosophy (behaviourism and logical positivism).

When Rosenblatt says in 'Retrospect and Prospect' (1990-95), for instance, that the New Criticism prevailed in post-war America because of a range of causes related to an overall fetishisation of science, she reveals her *via media*. On the one hand, she deplored what she thought of as the 'postwar glorification of science, fueled by fear of Soviet scientific superiority', which suited 'an intellectual climate of narrow empiricism in which behaviorism dominated psychology and logical positivism reigned in philosophy'.²⁶ And yet her own

²⁶ Rosenblatt, *Literature as Exploration*, 5th ed., pp. 289-90.

methods of theoretical development relied on empirical studies, as she herself admitted.²⁷ Rosenblatt was attracted to Dewey because, his politics aside, he suited her preference for the matter-of-fact responses to complex problems. Thinkers who seek to build on or evaluate Rosenblatt's transactional approach must at some point reconcile themselves to the limitations inherent in her qualified reification of science; although, as we shall see, the scientific element is further mitigated somewhat by Rosenblatt's less controlled, more individualised exploration of literature's potential to nurture personal growth.

Rosenblatt's colleague and friend at New York University (NYU), Gordon M. Pradl (see Chapter 2 for further discussion of his work), has found it regrettable that she should have been so pedantic about the precision of her terminology, describing to me 'her need to have the last word, to hold fast to the notion that no one else was quite capable of fully articulating and thus understanding the full import of her theory / wisdom'.²⁸ Although this tendency may, as Pradl points out, present a challenge to Rosenblatt's espousal of democratic practices, Rosenblatt makes it clear that it is not the words themselves – their denotations – which pose the problem, but rather their connotations or associations in the minds of other people.²⁹ Whereas the language for 'transaction' is 'living organism', the language for 'interaction' is that of the 'machine'.³⁰ And herein lies the ethics of terminology, and thus the need to get it right: 'transaction' is a move away from the mechanistic colouring of 'interaction'. Translated to individuals and their experiences, asserting the transactional way of being in the world was a way for Rosenblatt of representing the activity of individuals in 'having an experience', and by extension, in marshalling their thought to the challenge of living in a democratic society,

²⁷ Ibid., p. 290.

²⁸ Gordon M. Pradl, email to the author, July 4, 2015.

²⁹ Rosenblatt, *Making Meaning*, p. 40.

³⁰ Ibid.

where choice is ranged against subservience to authoritarianism.³¹ Seen biographically, transactional philosophy offered Rosenblatt a professional pathway for honing her deeper commitments to romantic visions of the uniqueness of the human person (see below).

If Dewey provided Rosenblatt with the term ‘transaction’ in order to describe the human’s way of existing in the world, Dewey’s fellow pragmatist, the Harvard philosopher William James, helped Rosenblatt develop an understanding of the way in which individuals experience the world. Rosenblatt was especially drawn to James’s concept of ‘selective attention’, which James explored in his two-volume *The Principles of Psychology* (1890). Rather than turn more directly to phenomenology, Rosenblatt saw James as anticipating the work of the German phenomenologist, Edmund Husserl, and therefore found it sufficient to turn to the master rather than the pupil. In any case, Rosenblatt found Husserl’s idealist framework ‘uncongenial’ to her overall transactional, post-foundational approach, which the pragmatists were championing at the turn of the century.³²

According to Rosenblatt’s understanding of James’s philosophy, ‘we are constantly selecting out of the stream, or field, of consciousness’.³³ This requires foregrounding on the one hand and ‘pushing into the background’ on the other.³⁴ In *Literature as Exploration* Rosenblatt likened James’s famous phrase ‘stream of consciousness’ to a ‘swishing over the surface of the mind’.³⁵ Selective attention counteracts what Rosenblatt refers to as the ‘emptiness’ of this swishing.³⁶

³¹ For an alternative reading of Rosenblatt’s use of Dewey’s ‘transaction’, see Mark Dressman and Joan Parker Webster, ‘Retracing Rosenblatt: “A Textual Archaeology”’, *Research in the Teaching of English*, 36 (2001): 110-45, pp. 135-37.

³² Rosenblatt, *Reader, Text, Poem*, p. xiv. See William James, *The Principles of Psychology*, vol. 1 (New York: Henry Holt, 1890), pp. 284-86.

³³ Rosenblatt, *Making Meaning*, p. 3.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ Rosenblatt, *Literature as Exploration*, 5th ed., p. 105.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

It is characteristic of Rosenblatt's work that in the context of formulating her theory, it is often only a tiny aspect of another thinker's work that is explicitly grafted into her own. Dewey's preference for transaction over interaction, and James's notion of selective attention are recurring themes in Rosenblatt's writing, and chime on some levels with the existentialist currents in her work. By de-contextualising these concepts from their originators' own work, Rosenblatt reinforces the distinctiveness of her own theory and stakes out her territory as an original thinker rather than as a critic (explicator) of other people's thought.

By the 1980s Rosenblatt's use of selective attention in her work had been further influenced by Gestalt psychology and latterly by cognitive psychology. Rosenblatt acknowledges having read the Austro-Hungarian-born psychologist, Max Wertheimer.³⁷ She also reports being involved with Gestalt experiments organised by Adelbert Ames and Hadley Cantril at the New School for Social Research in Manhattan.³⁸ These experiments sought to bring to light the way an individual's perception works with 'tentative Gestalts'.³⁹ Cognitive psychology translates 'tentative frameworks' into 'image schemas' and 'idealised cognitive models' (ICMs), and if they are shared, as 'cultural models'.⁴⁰ Cognitive psychology also draws attention to an individual's selective attention, whereby 'attention' and 'neglect' are forms of mental activity that foreground 'figure' and push 'ground' into the recess, which emphasise one thing over another.⁴¹ Rosenblatt was attracted to these ideas because, on the one hand, they emphasised the activity of the individual in negotiating a new experience, and on the other, they highlighted the equipment an individual brings to this negotiation by way of tentative frameworks. In the transactional experience, the individual is actively involved in making an experience meaningful for herself, by way of mental activity oriented to selection.

³⁷ Rosenblatt, *Reminiscences*, p. 322. Rosenblatt references Wertheimer's *Productive Thinking* (1945).

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 324.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ Peter Stockwell, *Cognitive Poetics: An Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2009), p. 33.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

Rosenblatt's decision to link, albeit tentatively and intuitively, James's theory of selective attention and the later work of cognitive psychology, further underscores her underlying preference for scientific frameworks for developing her particular theory. Yet the way in which Rosenblatt touches on such scientific ideas means that she softens the rather detached and clinical way in which these ideas are originally couched. Rosenblatt's connection between James's pragmatism (and indirectly, to his romanticism and transcendentalism) and later, cognitive science, against a backdrop of broader commitment to romantic and existentialist ideas of human experience means that her transactional approach represents a deepening of, rather than a detachment from, H.D.'s broadly existential framing of human experience.

H.D.'s approximation to the philosophy of de Beauvoir and Merleau-Ponty constitutes similar concentrations to Rosenblatt; for example, on the individual's negotiation of new experiences in the context of a broader process of personal growth and resistance to the establishment. Where Midget's experience is explored by concentrating on the visceral nature of her thought processes, which impact her body, Rosenblatt's tacit commitment to the findings of cognitive psychology represent a more concerted attempt to explain in more analytic language how an individual engages in selective attention in order to make an experience meaningful to him. For example, faced with a 'new situation in life' – a new experience – according to Rosenblatt, the individual needs to 'understand his own emotional response to the person or situation'.⁴² This understanding will be coloured by ICMs or the 'intentional arc' with which the individual attends to or neglects aspects of a situation. Of course, sometimes 'preoccupations and prejudices may have led him to exaggerate some things and ignore others'.⁴³ And so the individual 'has to bring his basic moral or psychological assumptions

⁴² Rosenblatt, *Literature as Exploration*, 5th ed., p. 215.

⁴³ Ibid.

[embedded or sedimented in his intentional arc or ICMs] out into the open to test the validity of their application to this new situation'.⁴⁴ Emotional conflict, which may cause a distortion of perception based on incongruous ICMs, encapsulates the transactional nature of an experience, wherein the individual is dynamically part of the situation – an active participant.

According to Rosenblatt, the individual is charged with an important responsibility to counter the empty 'swishing' over in the stream of consciousness with selective attention and the critique of ICMs. As with Midget in *Paint it Today*, in order for a person to grow and become critical of received wisdom, she must be encouraged to find ways of focusing her attention on how she constructs an experience in her mind. As Dewey maintains in his *Art as Experience* (1934), to have an experience requires a certain kind of attention towards that experience; it requires a mental activity which is conscious of being witness to and actively creating an experience, which typically has a beginning, a middle, and an end.⁴⁵ Evidently therefore, such 'experiences' are focused, and are likely to be unique according to the individual concerned, determining which events and situations to pay special attention to. However, one could also argue that the pressures of modernity were beginning to undermine the capacity to construct such a storied experience, which is apparent in some modernist writing, such as Woolf's 'moments of being'.⁴⁶ Yet the importance of emphasising the possibility of a focused experience may for Rosenblatt have been that much greater, given the nature of contemporary pressures on individuals.

For Midget, however, her attention is fixed on an argument with her mother, which holds important meaning for her because it represents a pivotal moment in her life, when a course of action is either opened or closed to her. Such experiences are not likely to occur every

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ John Dewey, *Art as Experience* (New York: Penguin, 2005), p. 58.

⁴⁶ See Bryony Randall, *Modernism, Daily Time and Everyday Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

day, and Rosenblatt's transactional theory of experience is similarly realistic in recognising that there is a necessary banality to life which makes 'having an experience' all the more important, because it does not happen at every moment of every day.⁴⁷ Rosenblatt's engagement with the Jamesian notion of 'stream of consciousness' therefore differs in part from that of Joyce and Woolf, whom Rosenblatt acknowledges reading in the 1920s as their novels were published.⁴⁸ While advising her students to grow in awareness about particular moments of heightened experience – moments of tension which require increased focus – Rosenblatt cautions against an overly introspective and insular mentality in her students.

Selective attention to experience is the organising principle of Rosenblatt's advocacy that students develop their own philosophy of life, to help them avoid passing passively through life, subject to the whims of others. Rosenblatt began advocating a philosophy of life in her editorial comment for *The Barnard Bulletin* between 1923-24. Here she rejected the concept of college 'as a place where experts are trained for the punctiliously accurate administration of our complex industrial machinery' and stressed instead that the student 'should be able to comprehend the machine in its entirety' – to be critical of it, in other words.⁴⁹ Such critical activity, which derives from an evolving 'student philosophy', would assess the value of academic study and its relationship to 'actual life' and the 'development of [...] a well-rounded personality'.⁵⁰ Eschewing a mechanistic conception of life and espousing a discriminating attitude of mind attentive to 'actual life' are the means of nourishing a 'well-rounded personality' which is, most importantly, capable of evaluating 'new trends of opinions' and forming 'new values'.⁵¹

⁴⁷ Rosenblatt, *Literature as Exploration* 5th ed., p. 32.

⁴⁸ Rosenblatt, *Reminiscences*, p. 259.

⁴⁹ [Louise M. Rosenblatt], 'Comment', *The Barnard Bulletin*, November 2, 1923, p. 2.

⁵⁰ [Louise M. Rosenblatt], 'Comment', *The Barnard Bulletin*, January 18, 1924, p. 2.

⁵¹ [Louise M. Rosenblatt], 'Comment', *The Barnard Bulletin*, February 29, 1924, p. 2.

It is difficult to say whether Rosenblatt was influenced by Dewey at this stage in her career, but her commitment to the development of ‘well-rounded’ individuals capable of living meaningful lives in an American democracy certainly chimes with Dewey’s ideas about education – ideas which Rosenblatt imbibed more consciously a decade later in her work for the Progressive Education Association.⁵² Importantly, such ideas differed from the later, post-war ‘life adjustment’ movement in American higher education, which sought to cater to the vastly increased numbers attending college due to the 1944 G.I. Bill. ‘Life adjustment’ was problematic for Rosenblatt because it represented ‘an anti-intellectualistic effort to prepare pupils to serve, to “adjust” to the needs of the status quo’, which ‘was confused with the progressives’ concern for meeting the needs of students. The progressives sought rather to help them to develop their capacities to the full, a view of education assuming a democratically mobile society’.⁵³

In the 1930s, with one eye on the totalitarian threats in Europe, Rosenblatt set the evaluation of opinion and the formation of new values as a crucial activity of literary study that could connect this activity to the world of the individual student. In her essay, ‘Retrospect and Prospect’, Rosenblatt reminds her readers that in 1938 ‘democracy was being threatened by fascism in Italy and totalitarian governments in Germany and Russia’, and draws attention to more recent events concerning the collapse of Eastern European communist regimes.⁵⁴ Present in both the 1995 and 1938 editions of *Literature as Exploration* is Rosenblatt’s claim that unpreparedness to think independently – or exercise a ‘discriminating attitude of mind’ – makes it more likely that ‘the young man and woman [will] seek to return to the infantile state in which there is no responsibility to make decisions; they are thus willing to blindly follow some

⁵² Rosenblatt often referenced Dewey’s 1938 *Experience and Education*.

⁵³ Rosenblatt, *Literature as Exploration*, 5th ed., pp. 288-89. On the growth of progressive education, see John Howlett, *Progressive Education: A Critical Introduction* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013).

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 296.

“leader” whose tools they become’.⁵⁵ It is important to note here that Rosenblatt grew up with a working-class father who, at the age of fifteen, resisted and escaped imperial Russia and arrived at the port of Baltimore to pursue a new life where he could be freer than he was in Russia.⁵⁶ Perhaps this family history, recalled by Rosenblatt on numerous occasions in later life, meant that she set the bar rather high for the possibilities of individual agency (see Chapter 3 for further discussion of Rosenblatt’s interest in democracy).⁵⁷

Nevertheless, if Rosenblatt partly developed her thinking out of her own experience (see below), she sought generalisation of it sufficiently to give direction to her transactional approach. Her belief in the importance of selecting values by which to live is a fundamental stream of thought throughout Rosenblatt’s career, from the 1920s to the 2000s, and as such makes Rosenblatt a deeply American thinker, descending from the American pragmatists who sought to create new ways of thinking after the Civil War of the 1860s.⁵⁸ When Ann E. Berthoff wrote that ‘Louise Rosenblatt makes me proud to be an American’, she was referring to Rosenblatt’s very American approach to cultural problems, in this case the value of literary studies for the wider society.⁵⁹ A pragmatic selectivity of values among students was central to this vision.

As I draw this half of the chapter to a close, it should be remembered that Rosenblatt’s transactional theory of human experience consists of three main elements. Firstly, she adopted the term ‘transaction’ in order to emphasise an individual’s dynamic engagement with the world, to stress experiences as conditioning people who in turn condition experiences.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 123.

⁵⁶ Jonathan Ratner in an email to the author, July 13, 2015.

⁵⁷ Garn Press, ‘Great Woman Scholars Part Three: Louise Rosenblatt’, <http://garnpress.com/2015/great-women-scholars-part-three-louise-rosenblatt/> (accessed online August 25, 2015).

⁵⁸ Louis Menand, *The Metaphysical Club* (London: Flamingo, 2002), pp. x-xi.

⁵⁹ Ann. E. Berthoff, ‘Democratic Practice, Pragmatic Vistas: Louise Rosenblatt and the Reader’s Response’ in John Clifford (ed.), *The Experience of Reading: Louise Rosenblatt and Reader-Response Theory* (Portsmouth, NH: Boynton / Cook, 1991), pp. 77-84, p. 84.

Secondly, she appropriated James's concept of 'selective attention' in order to highlight the work that goes in to 'having an experience' in the meaningful sense of the term. Rather than succumbing to the empty 'swishing' of the stream-of-consciousness, Rosenblatt encourages individuals to focus on potentially meaningful experiences and to shape them in their thinking. Finally, Rosenblatt extends this preoccupation with selective attention to the formation of people's philosophies of life, to the stirrings of wisdom. As with H.D., Rosenblatt sees the path to progress in the struggles individuals undertake to resist the pressures of conformity.

Where H.D. is more imaginative in her depiction of human experience, Rosenblatt's political concerns temper her obvious inclination to scientific exploration of human experience; they make her more of a maverick in terms of staking out an original approach to existing scientific concepts (such as transaction and selective attention). Indeed, Rosenblatt's individual approach manifests in her style of writing, which cherry picks the thought of others to develop her own line of thinking, which is entirely consistent with what she is advocating other people do also: develop a personal philosophy.

My central purpose, therefore, in examining how Rosenblatt and H.D. explore human experience is to theorise a vision of experience which is constructed. Even though an experience may emerge by way of epiphanies and successive 'moments of being', the important point is that when reflecting on an experience, the individual is actively involved in making meaning from it, which in turn feeds into the development of a philosophy of life that brings us into the domain of wisdom. I will now turn to the ways in which Rosenblatt and H.D. draw attention to the individual, and how they came to do so. Having theorised experience for the purposes of this thesis, I now theorise the individual, and so complete the groundwork of my personalist approach to literary experience and the quest for wisdom.

Commitment to the Individual

Personal Contexts

Befitting a personalist outlook, a commitment to the individual among my thinkers was born of personal experiences. If a commitment to the individual can be said to be a revelation about something universally profound about the human person – applicable in all times and places – then it is worth bearing in mind that for personalists ‘revelation’ is usually something which emerges from within before it finds expression in concrete forms of commitment.⁶⁰ For Rosenblatt and for H.D., a commitment to the individual began as an intuition and as an experience immanent in their lives. It is therefore necessary to proceed from assessing the personal contexts of this commitment among my thinkers before looking at their manifestations.

Rosenblatt’s commitment to the individual is fairly easy to delineate because she explored this extensively from an autobiographical angle in the 1980s and 1990s. In her 1982 interview for Columbia University, Rosenblatt revealed that growing up she had been ‘enveloped in an atmosphere in which there was constant thinking about the importance of the individual and the need for the individual’s right to develop freely and fully’.⁶¹ Her father, Samuel, encouraged Rosenblatt in her early reading, which highlighted Charles T. Sprading’s anthology of writing, *Liberty and the Great Libertarians* (1913). More than an abstract philosophical ideal, Rosenblatt was attracted to the lives of people, often Europeans as well as Americans, who exhibited a marked degree of individuality and purpose in defending the rights of others to live a free and full life. Moreover, being named after the French nineteenth-century anarchist Louise Michel exerted a strong influence on Rosenblatt’s commitment to the individual. ‘I had this image of being named after a woman who had been a leader and an

⁶⁰ Vallon, *An Apostle of Freedom*, p. 200.

⁶¹ Rosenblatt, *Reminiscences*, p. 3.

achiever [...] She fought on the barricades and so on'.⁶² It is significant that Rosenblatt focuses on such nouns for describing human character, especially 'achiever'. It was a feature of Rosenblatt's American, pragmatist turn of mind that high ideals had to be translated into actual practice: 'it was very important if you were going to improve the world (and obviously for somebody who was named [after] Joan of Arc of the Poor, this was part of my image of myself), that you had to do something'.⁶³

As with intellectual matters, Rosenblatt and her father shared their ideas about politics and when speaking of her early political activities, Rosenblatt implies that she and her father were of one mind in all things political. Early in her life her father's commitment to the ideas of the Russian anarchist philosopher, Petr Kropotkin, particularly 'mutual aid', served to direct Rosenblatt in the way of individuals helping each other rather than competing excessively with one another.⁶⁴ Although politically broadly libertarian, in the 1920s and 1930s Louise and Samuel supported Norman Thomas of the Socialist Party of America, before switching their allegiance to Franklin D. Roosevelt, because they felt that Roosevelt could meet the challenge of the Great Depression better than Thomas and the Socialists.⁶⁵ Later, in the 1960s, long after Samuel Rosenblatt had died, Louise and her husband, Sidney Ratner, were politically active in supporting civil rights because they saw these as fundamental to a democracy. 'I cannot recall when we were not members of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People', Louise noted in 1982.⁶⁶ Moreover, Rosenblatt recalled supporting the efforts of Martin Luther King, Jr., but resisted the attempts of the Black Panthers to push King's calls for change

⁶² Ibid., p. 15.

⁶³ Ibid., pp. 39-40.

⁶⁴ Rosenblatt, *Literature as Exploration*, 5th ed., p. 282.

⁶⁵ Rosenblatt, *Reminiscences*, p. 138.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 276.

in a more extreme direction, because she dreaded the road to separatism, which she saw as antagonistic to a pluralistic, democratic society (see Chapter 3).⁶⁷

Rosenblatt's commitment to the individual must therefore be seen against the backdrop of an equally important commitment to democracy, which requires that individuals co-operate in building a society which is conducive to others as well as to oneself. Rosenblatt's commitment to the individual was an intuition moulded by conversations with her father; it manifested later in life in the explicit formulations of her beliefs as well as political activism, defending democracy in order to defend the individual. The moment one finds stress on one element in her writing (democracy or the individual), one encounters the other. The only way to reconcile these two emphases, on the micro and the macro, is to see them as facets of Rosenblatt's overall intellectual sympathies, which she reconciled on the basis that they answered the problem of the needs of the individual and the needs of society. That is, her sympathy with romanticism and existentialism, which traditionally prioritise the individual as the primary unit of reference for creating value in life, co-existed with an active interest in socialist politics. Rosenblatt's pragmatism simply acted as a channelling force for translating broad principles into action, which for her involved political campaigning, from door-to-door canvassing in New York City, to applying pressure on political figures regarding policy changes, particularly in education.⁶⁸ Of course, her commitment to the individual also translated into a specific theory of literary study which Rosenblatt expounded and developed over a number of decades, to be explored shortly.

H.D.'s commitment to the individual, on the other hand, is more diffuse because she never engaged directly with politics in the way that Rosenblatt did throughout her life. H.D.'s

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 277.

⁶⁸ See Louise Rosenblatt, 'What We Have Learned: Reminiscences of the NCTE', *The English Journal*, 66 (1977): 88-90, p. 88; Jeanne M. Connell, 'Continue to Explore: In Memory of Louise Rosenblatt (1904-2005)', *Education and Culture*, 21 (2005): 63-79, pp. 64-65.

commitment to the individual is simultaneously a commitment to herself – to defining a sense of herself against the definitions provided by others. She focused her interest on the individual through exploring the effect of conflict within the bounds of human experience, from her own marital struggles to the global conflict of world war. H.D.’s creative development began in the early modernist years of the 1910s, which in some instances was casting off the shackles of dominant discourses such as nineteenth-century liberalism.⁶⁹ As Rachel Potter has observed, modernists like H.D. and D. H. Lawrence absorbed a range of liberal ideas, but H.D. and Lawrence were also influenced by the German philosopher Max Stirner, whose concept of the ‘egoist’ posited ‘an individual who “owns” himself, “knows” himself, and returns “into” himself’.⁷⁰ Echoing the little magazine of that name, in which H.D. and Lawrence published, egoism permits the individual the freedom to ‘create his own understanding of the world’, which in Lawrence’s case is demonstrated in poetry collections such as *Look! We have come through!* (1917) and *Pansies* (1919).⁷¹

Lawrence may have been ambivalent about ‘egoism’ as a term, particularly from 1914, when he considered egoism to be the ‘epitome of modern irreverence, the particular spiritual malady of the modern soul’.⁷² But as Clark and Potter admit, Lawrence eschewed one conception of the individual to promote another – what Potter terms ‘singularity’.⁷³ The idea of ‘singularity’ anticipates my later discussion in Chapter 4 of Derek Attridge’s use of this term, which focuses on the particular, individual nature of reading literature as a singular event in time. In the context of H.D.’s writing, however, to be ‘singular’ is to find a way of developing

⁶⁹ For a survey of modernism’s relationship to liberalism, see Janice Ho, ‘The Crisis of Liberalism and the Politics of Modernism’, *Literature Compass*, 8 (2011): 47-65.

⁷⁰ Rachel Potter, *Modernism and Democracy: Literary Culture 1900-1930* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 19-20.

⁷¹ Bruce Clark, ‘D. H. Lawrence and the Egoist Group’, *Journal of Modern Literature*, 18 (1992): 65-76, p. 68; Potter, *Modernism and Democracy*, p. 21.

⁷² Clark, ‘Lawrence and the Egoist Group’, p. 73.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 74; Potter, *Modernism and Democracy*, p. 98, p. 112.

the self, of becoming free from the status quo. H.D. was concerned to ‘highlight experience in its immediacy’ (as in *Paint it Today*), and to expand ‘the possibilities of perception’.⁷⁴

As for other modernists, such as Woolf, Mansfield, and Lawrence, the First World War intensified H.D.’s preoccupation with the experience of individuals and the forms of individualism in the Western world. In a post-war review of W. B. Yeats’s collection of poems, *Responsibilities* (1916), H.D. recognises the struggles of artists in the 1890s to resist the oppressive denouncements of so-called ‘Philistines’, but claims that the war’s intensification of technological mastery has had a devastating effect on the way people experience beauty, and thus enrichment in their lives.⁷⁵ H.D.’s reference to her group of artists in this essay as *les jeunes* echoes her similar exploration of the challenges facing her group in *Bid Me to Live* (1960). Although not the ‘lost generation’ of the 1920s – the American expatriates in Paris with whom Rosenblatt was affiliated (see Introduction) – H.D.’s group (Richard Aldington, the Lawrences, Dorothy Yorke, Cecil Gray) was ‘lost actually in fact, doomed by the stars in their courses, an actuality, holocaust to Mars, not blighted, not anaemic, but wounded, but dying, but dead’.⁷⁶ By casting her sense of loss and care for individuals with which she is intimate in the language of astronomy and astrology, H.D. universalises her war experience at the same time as alluding to the characteristically individualistic nature of astrology, which positions the individual at the centre of the natal chart.

In his history of Bloomsbury responses to the First World War, Jonathan Atkin argues more generally for a ‘notion of a person standing apart from the war and feeling an aesthetic

⁷⁴ Stephen Eric Bronner, *Modernism at the Barricades: Aesthetics, Politics, Utopia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), p. 3, p. 6.

⁷⁵ H.D., ‘Responsibilities’, n.d. H.D. Papers, Yale University. See also H.D., ‘Responsibilities’, *Agenda*, 25 (1987-88): 51-53. For a comparison of H.D.’s review and Ezra Pound’s of the same volume, see Diana Collecott, *H.D. and Sapphic Modernism 1910-1950* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 112-13.

⁷⁶ H.D., *Bid Me to Live* (London: Virago, 1984), p. 8.

or humanistic reaction against it'.⁷⁷ By 'humanistic' Atkin means its 'formal meaning, that of Classical studies and literary culture and an intellectual order that placed the mind of man and human interests first'.⁷⁸ Atkin is locating an area of activity which was pitted against the values inherent in war, where individuals are subordinated to national interests. Although not phrased in the language of humanism, H.D.'s modernist concern in 'Responsibilities' is to claim that war survivors have a responsibility to invoke the aesthetic in order to create a world alternative to the technological trajectory that led to the efficiency of slaughter in the war. H.D. is suggesting that the search for beauty is an ethical response to the evil of war – a response which is personalistic because this search is conducted by and for individual persons rather than the interests of an aggregate, such as the nation.

Having given an indication of how Rosenblatt and H.D. arrived at a commitment to the individual, I now wish to show in more detail how they manifested this commitment, especially in relation to the experience of being a student. As thinkers interested in learning and personal growth, Rosenblatt and H.D. also naturally draw attention to the experiences of learners who are concrete persons as well. For Rosenblatt, this had a tangible impact on the nature of her theory of reading and the context in which she set literary studies. For H.D., her own sense of failure at a college education found expression in prose writing which asserts personal ways of approaching knowledge.

The Student's Experience

In her biography of H.D., Barbara Guest claims that H.D.'s failure at Bryn Mawr College was not down to ill health, as H.D. herself hinted, but instead to a sense of shame at failing English and scoring near-failures in her other subjects, as well as the pressures of being Ezra Pound's

⁷⁷ Jonathan Atkin, *A War of Individuals: Bloomsbury attitudes to the Great War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), p. 4.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

friend.⁷⁹ H.D. entered Bryn Mawr in 1905 and became friends with fellow students William Carlos Williams and Marianne Moore, while Pound was studying at the University of Pennsylvania. However, H.D. left in her mid-sophomore year. When she entered Bryn Mawr she was fairly unschooled: her knowledge consisted of ‘fairy tales, myths, music, Moravian legends’.⁸⁰ In addition to her subjects at Bryn Mawr, Pound introduced her to ‘the troubadours, Provence, William Morris, Algernon Swinburne’ as well as ‘the classics – Latin and Greek poets; Henrik Ibsen, Count Maurice Maeterlinck, even yoga, whatever his greedy mind picked up’.⁸¹ On the one hand, Pound denounced nineteenth-century American poets (especially Henry Longfellow), but on the other hand he chose late English romantics such as Morris and Swinburne to energise his modernising impulses, as well as drawing upon the exotic European traditions of the much earlier Provençal troubadours. As his 1916 poem, ‘A Pact’ suggests, Pound gradually reconciled himself to some of the strengths of his poetic predecessors (with Walt Whitman, in this case): ‘We have one sap and one root – / Let there be commerce between us’, he declares.⁸² Yet for H.D., Pound’s enthusiasms were all a bit much. As Guest puts it: ‘The truth was that she was facing dual worlds: an authoritarian institute of learning, and an equally authoritarian poet. It was either Ezra Pound or Bryn Mawr. “Remember,” wrote Hilda [to her friend, Mary Herr] about her abrupt departure, “I was an outcast.”’⁸³

In her novel, *HERmione* (written 1927), H.D. explores this sense of feeling like an ‘outcast’. The novel concentrates on the period immediately following her departure from Bryn Mawr, around 1906. When H.D.’s daughter, Perdita, wrote an introductory essay to *HERmione*, she talked of opening Pandora’s Box in looking back at her mother’s early years: ‘As I expected,

⁷⁹ Barbara Guest, *Herself Defined: The Poet H.D. and Her World* (London: Collins, 1985), p. 5.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² Ezra Pound, ‘A Pact’ in Margaret Ferguson et al., *The Norton Anthology of Poetry*, 5th ed. (New York: W. W. Norton, 2005), p. 1269.

⁸³ Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 5.

there are skeletons and poltergeists. But uplift too, illuminations. I'm learning so much – a scholar's pupil, trailing them in a postgraduate course of my own'.⁸⁴ It is suitably ironic that Perdita conceived of exploring *HERmione* in terms of an advanced university education given that the impetus for her mother's writing the novel in the first place was a need to come to terms with her feelings surrounding her own educational failure. On the other hand, perhaps Perdita's comment reclaims her mother's experience as instructive in itself, questioning whether H.D.'s 'failure' was really a failure. Perdita is coming to terms with the past in the language of a 'postgraduate course' replete with 'skeletons and poltergeists', supernatural figures which are also (usually) 'outcasts' in academic, university environments.

H.D.'s language in *HERmione* is unhinged rather than fixed; first and third-person pronouns are interchanged; states of being are repeated; words appear and then reappear. Rather than recalling her experience in linear progression and in clear language with straightforward syntax, H.D. causes her language to buckle in the same way that she felt her life buckling at the time:

Only now she knew that failing at the end meant fresh barriers, fresh chains, a mesh here. The degree almost gained would have been redemption, something she hardly realized, tutoring or something, teaching ... something she had an inkling would bring her in, would have brought her in a 'salary.'⁸⁵

Recalling Midget's thoughts in *Paint it Today*, Hermione Gart moves the attention in the direction of employment through extensive use of hypotaxis. As with the 'anythings' which crowd upon Midget's heels in *Paint it Today*, in this passage the 'somethings' crowd on one another, while information is slowly leaked through subordinate clauses which delve into the

⁸⁴ Perdita Schaffner, 'Pandora's Box' in H.D., *HERmione* (New York: New Directions, 1981), pp. vii-xi, p. viii.

⁸⁵ H.D., *HERmione*, p. 12. Further references to this text are given in parentheses in the main body.

narrator's psyche: 'would bring her in' (a general statement of possibility) is then followed by 'would have brought her in a "salary"' (greater specificity with the pathos of the hypothetical). Through the staggered release of this information we feel Hermione's struggle, and perhaps sense her pain in not only failing her education, but in being denied the opportunity to become an educator herself.

It is the distinction in *HERmione* between academic and especially scientific language, and Hermione's more personal way of expressing her emotional states, which is especially striking, and gestures at her attempt to reclaim her learning experience from failure according to external authorities. Writing her novel in 1927, H.D. is conscious of the gap between her understanding of psychology then and what she had understood back in the late 1900s. Principal among such new understandings are the concepts of Freudian psychoanalysis: 'Words that had not (in Philadelphia) been invented, beat about [the household]: Oedipus complex, inferiority complex, claustrophobia. Words beat and sizzled and a word bent backward like a saw in a sawmill reversed, turned inward, to work horrible destruction' (15). Rather than concepts such as the Oedipus complex doing positive work in helping Hermione to understand how she is feeling, H.D. is suggesting that retrospective knowledge is bittersweet. H.D. sees the language of psychoanalysis working forcibly and invisibly around Hermione, somewhat detached from her; its concepts are unable to help her, and instead 'work horrible destruction'. 'The catch was', says the narrator, 'that her perception was ahead of her definition. She could put no name to the things she apprehended' (13). Unable to grasp either the language of psychoanalysis or the scientific language of her brothers and father (a professor of astronomy at the University of Pennsylvania), H.D. moves the attention to her perception and apprehension and finds suitable ways of expressing this which resist the mastery of scientific definition.

In fact, Hermione is deeply preoccupied with the process of naming in *HERmione*. 'The mind of Her Gart was a patchwork of indefinable association', writes H.D. (24). Rather than

trying to define herself according to the logic of others (focusing on her failure as a formal student, for example), Hermione turns to Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale* and through association finds a way of perceiving her experience and her personality. 'I am out of *The Winter's Tale*', says Hermione (32). Hermione focuses on Perdita's famous speech in Act IV Scene iii, which includes the lines 'Daffodils, / That come before the swallow dares, and take / The winds of March with beauty', and quotes 'lilies of all kinds' (32). Hermione links 'lilies of all kinds' to water scenery and imagines 'water lying filled with weeds and lily-pads ... lilies of all kinds ... became even more fluid, was being taken up and up, element (out of chemistry) became vapour' (32).

Through reading her experience of being unsettled and displaced onto *The Winter's Tale*, Hermione is able to extract herself from a situation in which she feels increasingly submerged, and begin to name herself: 'She said, "HER, HER, HER. I am Her, I am Hermione ... I am the word AUM." This frightened her' (32). 'AUM' is a variant of the ancient Eastern concept of Om found in the Upanishads, which is really an oral sound expressive of an inner self, an inner energy – something personal. What frightens Hermione is the bringing into existence of a name which is expressive rather than definitive of her evolving sense of self. Susan Stanford Friedman has read H.D.'s autobiographical prose in terms of narrative personalism and argues that for H.D., 'words, most especially names, were potent forces that not only signified, but also called into being what they named'.⁸⁶ Although Friedman focuses on H.D.'s *noms de plume*, her insights are pertinent to *HERmione* also: 'names were texts that could be read for the selves they constructed, for the "spell" they cast in an endless process of self-conscious self-making'.⁸⁷ By repeating to herself 'I am Her, I am Hermione', Hermione focuses her associative, patchwork thinking which perceives connections and apprehends

⁸⁶ Susan Stanford Friedman, *Penelope's Web: Gender, Modernity, H.D.'s Fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 36.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

mysteries that are beyond the boundaries of external authorities such as scientific language. She is also calling herself into existence as a person, as an existential subject.

Feeling the ‘fresh barriers, fresh chains, a mesh here’ by remaining at home under fraught conditions (Pound’s looming presence, her mother’s domineering attitude, and her sister-in-law’s cohabitation), H.D., through Hermione, feels the scientific element about her in an oppressive way. Her response is to try and cultivate a personality which has a different attitude towards learning, one which is not bound, as Guest says, by the ‘authoritarian’ nature of Bryn Mawr or Pound, who prescribed reading for her which eventually overwhelmed her. ‘I am the word AUM’ is an explicit attempt at aligning herself with a different kind of identity, one which is focused in an inward way upon emotional energy. In some ways by writing *HERmione* H.D. was selecting out of her life those aspects which make an experience in the Peircean sense of the term, and part of her method was to engage Hermione with her namesake in *The Winter’s Tale*, thus validating Hermione’s distinctive turn of mind which departed from the established ways under whose standards she was deemed a failure.

Rosenblatt began teaching a year after H.D. wrote *HERmione*, and although she taught in institutions somewhat different to Bryn Mawr, in New York City, Rosenblatt was nevertheless conscious of the ways in which students came to the study of literature as whole persons, whose lives beyond the classroom shaped their experiences with literature and vice versa. One wonders whether H.D. would have had more success in formal English studies if she had been able to approach literature in an exploratory manner, after the fashion of *Literature as Exploration*.

Part of the impetus behind Rosenblatt’s 1938 *Literature as Exploration* was to advance a mode of learning and teaching which was focused on seminar-style discussion, against a dominant transmission model of learning which manifested in the lecture syllabus then

predominating in the universities in the early decades of twentieth-century America.⁸⁸ Rosenblatt's advocacy of de-centered teaching was well thought through and was deeply connected to her political orientation, which favoured democratic style conversations more than lectures that could easily communicate (indirectly) the idea that there was only one way to read a given text or approach a particular topic. Because Rosenblatt tended to focus her attentions on young adults, she was especially sensitive to the fact that such people were still in the formative years of their life, and thus especially impressionable. By promoting democratic conversations about literary experiences, Rosenblatt hoped to clear the path of potential obstacles to the kinds of encounters she hoped students would have with literature under her vision of literary studies. Turning to Rosenblatt after a discussion of H.D.'s experience as a student helps to generalise H.D.'s personal experience, and see how literary studies might be moulded by a firm commitment to the individual.

Rosenblatt's 1938 *Literature as Exploration* was 'written on the rebound' from work completed for the U.S. Progressive Education Association's Commission on Human Relations from 1935-36, which released her from teaching commitments at Barnard (she was still an instructor at this point).⁸⁹ This Commission was 'charged with the responsibility of helping young people with the urgent problems of personal and social living today'.⁹⁰ The 1938 edition of *Literature as Exploration* is Rosenblatt's most explicitly reader-centred and practical work; indeed, perhaps the work most overtly concerned with the individual – or with 'personality', as she writes frequently, devoting Chapter 7 entirely to 'Personality'. 'Individual' and 'personality' are interchangeable terms in Rosenblatt's work and do not connote the more acute

⁸⁸ See Gerald Graff, *Professing Literature: An Institutional History* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1989).

⁸⁹ Rosenblatt, *Literature as Exploration*, 5th ed., p. 283.

⁹⁰ Alice V. Keliher, 'Foreword' in Rosenblatt, *Literature as Exploration* (New York: D. Appleton-Century, 1938), pp. xi-xii, p. xi. For a good introductory history of progressive education, see John Howlett, *Progressive Education: A Critical Introduction* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013).

differences Berdyaev located, wherein the individual is a natural, sociological entity and the personality is something existential and created as an ongoing project, concerned with the spiritual in human beings.⁹¹

Although *Literature as Exploration* went through four subsequent editions (1968, 1976, 1983, 1995), no substantial revisions were made.⁹² Ancillary texts were added or subtracted to the main body, cultural and literary references were updated, and stylistic adjustments are evident.⁹³ The 1938 edition is nevertheless the richest edition to consult in relation to the student's experience in the course of literary study. According to Dressman and Webster, in this edition Rosenblatt's voice is more 'intimate, immediate, and collegial' than in subsequent editions.⁹⁴ The author is very much a teacher speaking to other teachers, all of whom implicitly care about their students and what they bring to their reading of literature. In this overt concern for the student in the 1938 edition of *Literature as Exploration*, Rosenblatt anticipates the curricular design she later developed at NYU: together, these materials convey the way in which Rosenblatt appreciated the value of the individual and how a sense of this value should impact literary study.

According to Rosenblatt, in the classroom the student should be able to 'feel the validity of his own experience'.⁹⁵ The teacher of literature must therefore be aware of predominant themes present in contemporary American society and the wider world that may be shaping the student's life outside the classroom. The student is set in the midst of an 'unsettled world' and a 'society singularly lacking in consistency' (3, 102). There are changes in economic and social attitudes appearing at an 'unprecedented speed' and where 'few traditional ideas remain

⁹¹ Nicolas Berdyaev, *The Destiny of Man*, trans. Natalie Duddington (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1945), pp. 54-61.

⁹² Dressman and Webster, 'Retracing Rosenblatt', p. 118.

⁹³ Ibid., pp. 118-19.

⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 129.

⁹⁵ Rosenblatt, *Literature as Exploration*, p. 81. Further references to this text are given in parentheses in the main body.

unquestioned' (102). The long-term development of industrial society in the U.S. after the Civil War 'produced a welter of new relationships and new images of the values to be sought for' (200). More recently, in the mid-1930s, the Depression called into question the assumption that a man without a job is 'shiftless', while the rise of totalitarian regimes in Germany, Italy, and Japan, exposed the way in which nations can mask racism with 'national egoism' (124, 185). Over the course of further editions, Rosenblatt adapted these social concerns to fit more contemporary developments.

Rosenblatt places emphasis on the need for the student to 'feel the validity of his own experience' because she is aware of the gap between theory and practice. As the educator Parker Palmer wrote many decades later, one does not need to look at the latest theories of pedagogy or epistemology to see what is happening in education; rather, one needs to 'observe the way we teach and look for the theory of knowledge implicit in those practices. That is the epistemology our students learn – no matter what our best contemporary theorists may have to say'.⁹⁶ Translated into broader terms, Palmer's point resonates with Rosenblatt's concern for developing a theory of reading by engaging with the student's actual transactions with literature in an institutional setting.

In her 1956 essay, 'The Acid Test for Literature Teaching', Rosenblatt points out the ways in which college students are often distrustful of their own experiences in relation to literary study. Because of particular New Critical teaching practices and implicit assumptions about the nature of literature (as a fixed, objective entity, for example), Rosenblatt believes that for many students, the 'quest is for the sophisticated interpretation and the accepted judgment'.⁹⁷ 'Shock and confusion often result', she continues, 'when they are asked about the

⁹⁶ Parker Palmer, *To Know as We Are Known: Education as a Spiritual Journey* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 1993), p. 29.

⁹⁷ Rosenblatt, *Making Meaning*, p. 68.

impact of the work on themselves as unique personalities'.⁹⁸ Thus, students 'may divert their original interest in literature to studies around and about literature', which in the mid-1950s usually meant intricate formal analysis.⁹⁹ By using the language of 'quest' and 'personality', Rosenblatt reveals her sympathies and recognises that quest (to be explored in more detail in Chapter 4) and personality are important if often contested aspects of literary study. Positioning such words in unusual contexts, such as a 'quest' for knowledge which may actually ignore personality, Rosenblatt highlights the need to take the individual's experience seriously, because it is not self-evident that it was at this time sufficiently valued in English studies, either by teachers or by the students themselves.

On the other hand, Rosenblatt draws attention to the student's experience because, at least in the mid-1930s, the threat from fascism of conformity seemed especially threatening, hence her reference to national egoism. Like other thinkers with personalist sympathies, such as Berdyaev and Martin Buber, as well as Kant (who influenced Berdyaev), Rosenblatt condemned that which 'reduces [the individual] to a mere thing, instrument, or automaton' (195).¹⁰⁰ For Rosenblatt, the individual possesses 'fundamental dignity and worth' and must be defended against subordination or 'abstraction' to 'a superior reality or value, such as the State, the Nation, the Race, the Elect, the Heroes, or the Supermen' (196). Revealing her distinctly personalist sympathies, Rosenblatt, at least in this instance, is effectively condemning what Berdyaev referred to as 'objectivization', which projects the individual as an abstraction, and thus as something liable to misuse and abuse. In his book, *Slavery and Freedom* (1944), for example, Berdyaev aligns objectivization with slavery; the abstraction of the human is liable to leave her vulnerable to being used as a means to an end, rather than valued as an end

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Bengtsson, *The Worldview of Personalism*, p.57; p. 205.

in herself.¹⁰¹ However, as I argue in Chapter 3, at some points Rosenblatt is in danger of objectivising the human through her commitment to an idea of democracy which is supposed to safeguard human wellbeing.

In *Literature as Exploration* Rosenblatt is deliberately explicit about the kinds of experiences students may bring to their study of literature because she is aware of the threats to the voicing of these experiences. As with W. Somerset Maugham's character from *Of Human Bondage*, Philip Carey, Rosenblatt suggests that the young person typically wishes to discern 'man's relation to the world he lives in, man's relation with the men among whom he lives, and finally, man's relation to himself' (100).¹⁰² She then goes into much more detail, anticipating the kinds of questions young people may be asking themselves:

What are the personal emotional realities behind the world of appearances? What indeed does it mean to the individual – and potentially to me, the adolescent, about to 'live' – to be a leader or a follower, to be a member of a community, to earn one's living, to create a family, a circle of friends, to meet the ups and downs of fate, to know love and birth and death? What does it 'feel like,' from within, to be this kind of person or that? To be angelic, cruel, dominating, passive? What are the satisfactions, what are the elements, of the many roles that may be played? (101)

It is important to recognise that the typical nature of these questions derives from Rosenblatt's experience of teaching the generally affluent young women of Barnard College; adjectives such

¹⁰¹ See Nicolas Berdyaev, *Slavery and Freedom*, trans. R. M. French (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1944). While warming to Nietzsche in his critique of empty religious formalism, Berdyaev was nevertheless critical of his doctrine of the superman, which Rosenblatt touches upon here as well.

¹⁰² Rosenblatt's uniform use of 'he' and 'man' to refer to any individual should not be read as a sexist position; it merely reflects the literary conventions of the day. See Elizabeth A. Flynn, *Feminism Beyond Modernism* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2002), pp. 109-10.

as ‘angelic’, ‘cruel’, ‘dominating’, and ‘passive’ indirectly refer to Rosenblatt’s latent preoccupation in *Literature as Exploration* with women’s roles in society and their relationship to men.¹⁰³ Furthermore, although Barnard had admissions quotas for minority students such as Jews (which is how Rosenblatt managed to study at Barnard in the first place), it was a fairly traditional liberal arts college, and Rosenblatt’s editorials for *The Barnard Bulletin* reveal her frustration with the apathy among some of the women who obviously were not greatly committed to their education.

One exception to this trend of the conventional is Barnard’s Dean from 1911-47, Virginia Gildersleeve, whom Rosenblatt acknowledges in her 1931 PhD thesis. Gildersleeve was the only American female delegate in 1945 to negotiate the UN Charter, and was by all accounts instrumental in helping Rosenblatt in her graduate studies in France and London, introducing her to the British academic Caroline Gordon (wife of Allen Tate), for example. When Rosenblatt left Barnard in 1938, however, and joined the Department of English at Brooklyn College, she found that the English curriculum at Brooklyn was even more conservative, and tended to model itself on prestigious institutions such as Harvard. In any case, the longevity of *Literature as Exploration* means that the list of student preoccupations was tested by teaching experience over the decades in other institutions, such as NYU, Rutgers, Northwestern, Michigan State, Pennsylvania, and Massachusetts.¹⁰⁴

Turning to the potential of literature to engage the individual’s experiences, Rosenblatt declares that ‘no matter what the form – poem, novel, drama, biography, essay – literature makes alive and comprehensible to us the myriad ways in which human beings meet the infinite possibilities that life offers’ (6). She is keen to highlight ‘the human value, the human experience, that literature presents’ (8). These statements come after an almost lyrical passage

¹⁰³ See Flynn, *Feminism Beyond Modernism*, pp. 109-115.

¹⁰⁴ Connell, ‘Continue to Explore’, p. 64.

on literature's potential to evoke human experiences, reminiscent of the conclusion to her PhD thesis, in which her critical voice emerges by aligning herself with earlier defenders of the value of literary art, in this case the Italian philosopher, Benedetto Croce, and the Russian novelist, Lev Tolstoy:

For is not the subject-matter of literature everything that man has thought, or felt, or created? The lyric poet utters all that the human heart can feel, from joy in 'the cherry hung with snow' to the poignant sense of this world 'where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin, and dies.' The novelist sets forth the intricate web of human relationships with their hidden pattern of motive and emotion [...] The writer of stories catches some significant moment, some mood, some clarifying clash of wills in the life of an individual or a group [...] The dramatist builds a dynamic structure out of the tensions and conflicts of intermingled human lives [...] The joys of adventure, the delight in the beauty of the world about us, the intensities of triumph and defeat, the self-questionings and self-realizations, the pangs of love and hate – indeed, as Henry James has said, 'all life, all feeling, all observation, all vision' – these are the province of literature. (5-6)

Rosenblatt was especially fond of quoting this line from Henry James. By including references to Keats and A. E. Housman in the same breath, so to speak, she tacitly invokes a kind of literature, largely romantic, which is especially amenable to the kinds of literary experiences she thinks are most pregnant with questions concerning human existence. Furthermore, Rosenblatt singles out the roles of different kinds of artists because she sees these individuals as offering a service for other human beings. This is a subtle reordering of priorities in English

studies, away from the author or the stylistics of a text as ends in themselves, toward a sense of literature serving readers in a more personal, experiential way. Rosenblatt is everywhere trying to assert the dignity of the reader, and the ways in which literature might energise the inner life of the student. To borrow her metaphor from *Reader, Text, Poem*, the lamp is firmly directed toward the reader, away from the author, and even the text (a tendency embodied by New Criticism).¹⁰⁵

From 1948 onwards, once Rosenblatt moved to the School of Education at NYU, she sought to create an English curriculum which offered modules that helped to keep the spotlight on the reader, attentive to his experiences and mindful of his value as an end in himself. A ‘Doctoral Evaluation Project’ from 1978 claimed, perhaps optimistically, that NYU’s English education programme continued to produce graduates who embody ‘a human being vitally alive, talented in the use of the English language, willing to accept responsibility for his own personal growth and self-renewal, and able to teach others the processes of how to use language to learn, to change, to be, and to become’.¹⁰⁶ Rosenblatt aimed to counteract what she saw as ‘trained incapacity to teach’ in graduates of traditional liberal arts courses.¹⁰⁷ Simply ‘marching’ through historical periods of literature and learning information, theories, and arguments essentially extrinsic to the experience of the human drama of literature was, for Rosenblatt and her colleagues, antithetical to the process of self-discovery that NYU embedded in its curricula (234).

A course entitled ‘Criticism and the Literary Experience’ (1948-73), for example, ran over two semesters and devoted the first semester to nurturing student reading of primary imaginative material. Only after this crucial stage would examples of criticism, from Plato to

¹⁰⁵ Rosenblatt, *Reader, Text, Poem*, p. 1.

¹⁰⁶ ‘Doctoral Evaluation Project: New York University English Education Program, February 1978’, box 64, Office of the Dean, Daniel E. Griffiths, New York University Archives.

¹⁰⁷ Rosenblatt, *Reminiscences*, p. 234. Further references to this text are given in parentheses in the main body.

T. S. Eliot and beyond, be introduced (241). ‘I wanted’, Rosenblatt wrote, for ‘[my students] to be very much in command of a feeling of the nature of their own literary experience’ before they progressed to ‘see how critical theory might relate to it’ (242). Complementary courses in ‘Literature and the Crisis in Values’ (1952-72) and ‘Literature and Human Values’ (1956-64) were similarly structured, although these courses were more explicitly preoccupied with the ‘conflicts in values that the reader lived through as he or she read the [literary] work’ (242). Rosenblatt admitted that the works she chose – drawn primarily from European prose writers of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries such as Thomas Mann, T. S. Eliot, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, Kafka – were ones in which ‘questions of values – what are the priorities in life – were of extreme importance’ (266). But such ‘importance’ should be understood simply as a cue for the student reader to join up the world of the novel with his own life experience and current preoccupations, while also being open to new potentialities in human experience (see Chapter 3 on imagination). When Rosenblatt talks of the ‘importance’ of literature it is not in the Leavisite sense of observing something in a novel or novelist that should be apparent to everybody and have the same effect on all readers.¹⁰⁸ ‘Importance’ is very much a transactional affair, specific to the particular relationship between a reader and a text. Thus, Rosenblatt speaks of a transactional ‘meshing’ of different value systems in the experience of literature in these courses – a meeting ground of individual personalities (242).

As the 1960s progressed, NYU developed an array of modules that explicitly connected literature to the world of the student and to the world of the young people these students would eventually go and teach (244). As I mentioned in the Introduction, such an approach at NYU was influenced by the 1966 Anglo-American Conference at Dartmouth College, which sought to implement ‘growth’ models of learning in literary studies.¹⁰⁹ In Rosenblatt’s retirement year

¹⁰⁸ For example, see F. R. Leavis, *The Great Tradition: George Eliot, Henry James, Joseph Conrad* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1948).

¹⁰⁹ See Peter Smagorinsky, ‘Growth through English Revisited’, *The English Journal*, 91 (2002): 23-29.

(1971-72), for instance, there were courses entitled ‘Explorations in Reading: Experience and Process’, ‘Literature and the Adolescent Experience’, ‘Literature as Exploration’, ‘Explorations in Applied Literary Analysis’, ‘Literary Response and Personality’, and ‘The Reader’s Perception and Literary Form’.¹¹⁰ Rosenblatt’s theoretical commitments, shared in the 1960s by others in the U.S. such as James R. Squire and in the UK by James Britton, undergird these courses.¹¹¹ Repeated use of ‘experience’ and ‘exploration’ imply that reading and studying literature should be seen as an extension of life experience that has an intimate, exploratory relationship with ‘real life’ – a mode of personal growth. The difference between ordinary experience and the learning process invited in these modules is that the experience is deliberately focused through reflection, examining relationships between emotional responses to the reading of literature and inextricable responses to the human values evoked from this reading. In every module, the value of the individual is manifest in the critical attention given to his experience and personal development.

While Rosenblatt initiated the process of developing the literary section of NYU’s English education programme, her younger colleagues, especially Gordon Pradl, John Mayher, Harold Vine, and Marilyn Sobelman, built firmly on Rosenblatt’s foundations so that numerous teachers have graduated from NYU with a highly distinctive understanding of the need to explicitly join up literary study to the student’s own experiences and current preoccupations, while also initiating the challenge to move beyond these into new vistas.¹¹² If Dressman and Webster have criticised Rosenblatt for not writing a more expansive explanation of her theoretical commitments in the 1950s – after Dewey’s and Bentley’s philosophical *Knowing*

¹¹⁰ ‘Division of English Education, Speech, and Educational Theatre’, *New York University Bulletin*, 81 (1971): 165-83, pp. 166-68. New York University Archives.

¹¹¹ See John S. Mayher (ed.), ‘The Legacy of English Education at NYU’, *English Education*, 40 (2008): 277-292 for a more detailed commentary on NYU’s focus on life experience.

¹¹² Ibid. Conversation with Sondra M. Perl at the Graduate Center, City University of New York. March 30, 2015. See also Rosenblatt, *Reminiscences*, p. 280.

and the Known was published, which explored the transactional nature of experience – it should be remembered that these commitments were also born from an equally strong desire to engage with what Pradl has called the ‘messiness’ of actual teaching.¹¹³ ‘Actual teaching’ invited learning from experience when harnessed by intellectual investigation; indeed, these two activities were symbiotic for Rosenblatt.¹¹⁴ Her teaching *was* an exploration and demonstration of her theoretical commitments, as her theory was shaped by her teaching. As such, Rosenblatt’s method was personalistic; her theory grew from a series of intuitions which were then confirmed and developed by engaging with the thought of others.

As I draw this chapter to a conclusion, it is worth emphasising that the potentially polemical nature of Rosenblatt’s position, which became institutionalised at NYU, was largely due to her interpretation of the challenge and responsibility of educating people. It is understandable if the differences between growth or process models of learning in English and more traditional and re-imagined models evident in formalistic and historicist approaches to the discipline seem extraneous to the theory of literary experience among faculty of traditional English departments. However, through decades of observation and reflection as well as discussion with colleagues, Rosenblatt developed a commitment to literary study as a means of personal growth, valuing the individual and his experience, because she placed this within a broader educational vision which NYU aimed (and still continues to aim) to uphold.

It is instructive to set Rosenblatt’s interest in the student’s experience alongside H.D.’s experience as a student, and, while H.D.’s career was fruitful and innovative, it was nevertheless marked by her early ‘failure’ at Bryn Mawr and her decision to leave formal education. There is a sense of urgency and earnestness to some of Rosenblatt’s writing, a reminder that reading is ‘a transaction between two great kinds of stuff – literary works and living persons’.¹¹⁵

¹¹³ Dressman and Webster, ‘Retracing Rosenblatt’, p. 141; Pradl, email to author, July 24, 2015.

¹¹⁴ Rosenblatt, *The Reader, the Text, the Poem*, p. x; p. 178.

¹¹⁵ Wayne Booth, ‘Foreword’ in Rosenblatt, *Literature as Exploration*, 5th ed., pp. vii-xiv, p. xiii.

Conclusion

This chapter has begun to theorise the relationship between literary experience and the quest for wisdom, and to emphasise the personalist necessity of a prior commitment to the individual and his experience more generally. I have explored the way Rosenblatt and H.D. understand human experience and how their vision of experience entwines with their shared commitment to the growth of the individual. While both thinkers were receptive to the insights of French existentialism, Rosenblatt chose to put down intellectual roots in American pragmatism, largely because in her opinion it was so expansive and could approach many aspects of the individual's experience in American society.

I have argued that when placed together, Rosenblatt and H.D. urge a distinctly personalist perspective on the human being and his experience. The focus is very much on the way the person creates meaning for herself and strives towards freedom from determinacies. 'Having an experience' is symptomatic of a developing self-critical voice, and thus evidence of a distinctive personality less likely to bend unthinkingly to the will of others. Although, as H.D. explores in her autobiographical fiction, sometimes the tensions in family life can be so strong that it is hard to be simplistic and set up a false dichotomy between freedom and slavery.

The transactional vision precludes erecting a subject / object binary and instead posits an event in time, a coming together of multiple elements to create the work of literature which is deeply experiential and aesthetic. It is to this transactional theory of the literary work that I turn now, and explore its implications for literary context. For while Rosenblatt looked at the ways in which literature might engage an individual's experience, her emphasis was always that literature itself be experienced. As the literary theorist John Schad reflected recently (citing Roland Barthes as an antecedent), 'if literature [takes] "place" anywhere then it [is] in the

moment-by-moment act of reading'.¹¹⁶ The broader commitment to the individual's experience shared by Rosenblatt and H.D. therefore translates into a more specific vision of personal autonomy in the literary experience and the ways in which a student might pursue their own course of learning, resistant to the dictates of others.

¹¹⁶ John Schad and David Jonathan Y. Bayot, *John Schad in Conversation* (Manila: De La Salle University Publishing House, 2015), p. 10.

2. Towards a Theory of Personalist Textual Sociability

In this chapter I argue that a fundamental commitment to a vision of the individual and her experience, as explored in the previous chapter, shapes a specific way of thinking with regard to literary experiences. Rosenblatt's transactional theory of the literary work teases out this connection in a fairly analytical way, although a deeper understanding of her theory in the context of institutional English studies serves a deeper knowledge of her approach and why it needs to be enhanced by turning to H.D. I contend that Rosenblatt's transactional theory was generalist in nature, and her theory of the literary experience always reflected her politics – her faith in democracy and the value of the individual. Her notion of the aesthetic-efferent continuum for literary experiences creates a framework for conceptualising different types of thinking, some of them intuitive and more obviously personal, while others are more detached, impartial, and objective. What I wish to make explicit about Rosenblatt's work, however, is its amenability to new notions of textual 'sociability' – a term the critic Rita Felski adapted in relation to a theory of contextualisms.¹

As I use it in this chapter, the term 'textual sociability' refers to a literary work's relational pull to other pieces of writing, artworks, and non-artistic experiences. Rosenblatt's transactional theory rests on a particular vision of contextualism, grounded in the reader's personal reservoir of past experiences which are activated during the literary experience. I wish to show how this version of context translates into a way of conceiving textual sociability – a concept which emphasises the personalist nature of literary experiences. By turning to the work of Rosenblatt and H.D., in this chapter I set forth a theory of personalist textual sociability.

Continuing the emphasis on the individual which Chapter 1 introduced, this portion of my thesis foregrounds the manner in which transactional literary experiences offer the most

¹ Rita Felski, "'Context Stinks!'", *New Literary History*, 42 (2011): 573-91, p. 589.

appropriate way of conceiving textual sociability in a personalist manner. Furthermore, by analysing Rosenblatt's theory alongside H.D.'s own explorations in *The Sword Went Out to Sea* (written 1947) and *The Mystery* (written 1949-50) into consciousness and aesthetic experience as pathways to learning, I show how this dialogue which I am constructing has implications for textual sociability and the negotiation of literary experiences alongside other people's, especially in the classroom. By developing a theory of personalist textual sociability in this chapter, I proceed in the next chapter to explore the implications in H.D.'s and Rosenblatt's work for the consideration of human experiences of different times and places. Whereas Chapter 2 focuses on the individual's literary experience, Chapter 3 turns to the social aspects of literary experience. The personalist vision of textual sociability in this chapter implies a particular approach to the imagination, and ultimately, to the configuration of human relations in the wider society. The three correlates in the thesis – emphasis on the individual's experience (Chapter 1), how this emphasis translates into a theory of personalist textual sociability (Chapter 2), and how such textual sociability has wider social implications (Chapter 3) – form the crux of my H.D.-Rosenblatt dialogue. In Chapter 4 this journey then informs a broader exploration of what it means to be in quest of wisdom in institutional English studies.

The first half of the chapter is a theoretical exploration of textual sociability in Rosenblatt's work and in H.D.'s novel, *The Sword Went Out to Sea*, highlighting its personalist nature. The second half of the chapter then explores personalist textual sociability in more concrete situations – in the learning experiences foregrounded in H.D.'s historical novel, *The Mystery*, and in the work of Rosenblatt's colleague, Gordon Pradl, who developed Rosenblatt's democratic commitments and applied them to classroom dynamics which foreground personalistic exchanges between students. I also explain why I believe that the transactional approach lends itself to personalistic exchanges in a more substantial way than other contextual approaches.

Personalist Textual Sociability

Aesthetic Reading, Associational Thinking, and Transactional Literary Criticism

To begin this chapter section, it is useful to outline Rosenblatt's transactional theory, and stress the importance of aesthetic reading within it. Since the millennium the 'aesthetic' in literary theory has been revived among those who practice a 'new aestheticism' – most notably Isobel Armstrong, who set forth her innovative agenda in *The Radical Aesthetic* (2000). As a response to the 'hermeneutics of suspicion', which tended to distance literary works as being in some way complicit with devious politics, Armstrong calls for a return to (ultra) close reading by drawing upon the aesthetics of Kant and Hegel, and by reckoning with literature's affective power.² In many ways sympathetic to Rosenblatt's transactional theory, the new aestheticism seems to be primarily text focused, although it certainly emphasises the fluidity of readings and the interplay of reader and text. However, I contend that Rosenblatt's theory of aesthetic reading, which draws upon sources that include but extend the remit of Kant and Hegel, remains pertinent precisely because of how she embedded it into a wider pedagogical vision, born of a broader philosophical understanding of how humans experience not just literature, but the rest of life as well.

The most pertinent textual material relating to Rosenblatt's theory of aesthetic reading, associational thinking, and what she called 'transactional literary criticism' is found in her later two books, *The Reader, the Text, the Poem: The Transactional Theory of the Literary Work* (1978, 1994) and *Making Meaning with Texts: Selected Essays* (2005). The fact that the latter was published by the educational publisher, Heinemann, reflects the multiple research methodologies and intended readership of the essays Rosenblatt collected the year before she died, which span literary studies and education. Both the methodologies and the readership

² See Isobel Armstrong, *The Radical Aesthetic* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000).

extend beyond the ‘literary’ orientation of *Reader, Text, Poem*, published by Southern Illinois University Press under the category of ‘Literary Theory’. But as Rosenblatt explains, the interdisciplinary nature of her later theoretical statements works to her advantage, as she believed that at the time, literacy experts usually ignored literature, and literary professionals tended to ignore ‘the problems of reading “ordinary” prose and how it differs from “literary” reading’.³ Together with the expansive discussions in *Reader, Text, Poem*, the essays in *Making Meaning with Texts* constitute a comprehensive repository of insight into the essentials of Rosenblatt’s critical theory.

From the 1950s onwards Rosenblatt postulated a continuum of stances for transacting with texts – for both ‘ordinary reading’ and ‘literary reading’. On the one hand lies the *efferent* stance, taken from the Latin verb ‘to carry away’ (*effere*), and on the other hand the *aesthetic* stance, adopted in light of its Greek sense: ‘perception through the senses, feelings, intuitions’.⁴ In its focus on perception, allusion to the Greek roots of the aesthetic stance conceals the element of choice Rosenblatt believed was involved in deciding among stances: ‘The efferent stance pays more attention to the cognitive, the referential, the factual, the analytic, the logical, the quantitative aspects of meaning. And the aesthetic stance pays more attention to the sensuous, the affective, the emotive, the qualitative’.⁵ On this account, to read any text efferently involves concentrating attention on extracting information from it. As Rosenblatt noted, this can be as obvious as a woman hurriedly reading a medicine bottle for information on dosage, or it can be as subtle as prefacing aesthetic reading of a poem ‘with requests for information or analysis that require predominantly efferent reading’.⁶

³ Louise Rosenblatt, *Making Meaning with Texts: Selected Essays* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2005), p. 43.

⁴ Rosenblatt, *Making Meaning*, p. 11.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. xxvi, p. 103.

In both efferent and aesthetic stances there is a choice of attention required – an extension of the selective attention Rosenblatt and the philosopher William James believed characterised all human experience (see Chapter 1). While drawing on British thinkers with romantic sensibilities, such as Coleridge and Walter Pater, to emphasise aesthetic reading and give a sense of its long history, Rosenblatt distinguishes her position by framing her transactional theory as pragmatist and particularly American, which has implications for her politics (to be discussed in Chapter 3). And while not wishing to anticipate a later discussion about the role of reading as a ‘social act’, it is true that Rosenblatt emphasises the agency of the individual; her readers are not those of the reader-response theorist, Stanley Fish, who are undeniably and often unconsciously part of ‘interpretive communities’ which shape the way readers choose what to focus on and ultimately what gets read – the nature of the literary work, in other words.⁷

Rosenblatt emphasised aesthetic reading because she felt that throughout ‘the entire educational process, the child in our society seems to be receiving the same signal: adopt the efferent stance’.⁸ As I explored in Chapter 1, the trend towards efferent reading in mid-century America coincided with the expansion of higher education after World War II and the need to prepare citizens instrumentally for life in a rapidly changing society – the so-called ‘life-adjustment’ movement.⁹ Of course, Rosenblatt also stressed the continuum of aesthetic-efferent reading and acknowledged that in most transactions with literary works of art there is a dynamic movement around the middle of the continuum.¹⁰ But she nevertheless emphasised the aesthetic stance because it was this orientation which she believed liberated students of literature to pursue inquiry on terms personal to them, and which might increase their

⁷ Stanley Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980).

⁸ Rosenblatt, *Making Meaning*, p. 81.

⁹ Louise M. Rosenblatt, *Literature as Exploration*, 5th ed. (New York: MLA, 1995), pp. 288-89.

¹⁰ Rosenblatt, *Making Meaning*, pp. 12-13.

sensitivity to other areas of life too: ‘Sensitivity to literary technique should be linked up with sensitivity to the array of human joys and sorrows, aspirations and defeats, fraternizings and conflict’.¹¹

Indeed, the New Critical emphasis on the ‘poem itself’ or the ‘novel itself’ also concerned Rosenblatt because her theoretical insights led her to see that the aesthetic nature or ‘literariness’ of a given text was not something inherent in the text as categorically distinct from the presence a reader to evoke it, for ‘Acquaintance with the formal aspects of literature will not in itself ensure aesthetic sensitivity’.¹² ‘We cannot assume’, she wrote, ‘that a poem rather than an argument about fences will be evoked from the text of [Robert] Frost’s *Mending Wall* or that a novel rather than sociological facts about Victorian England will be evoked from Dickens’s *Great Expectations*’.¹³ If other theorists, especially structuralists and formalists, located the ‘literary’ in specific formal features of a text, Rosenblatt offers an alternative understanding of the ‘literary’ – as that which emerges during an aesthetic experience of a text: ‘The individual reader brings the pressure of his personality and needs to bear on the inextricably interwoven “human” and “formal” elements of the work’.¹⁴ For Rosenblatt, the adoption of an aesthetic stance was essential in making sure that a poem or novel was read as precisely that, which, after all, is what distinguishes literary studies from other disciplines such as history, law, or politics, and even from other sub-disciplines within ‘English’, such as poetics or stylistics, which happen to be engaged in reading texts closely to elicit information.¹⁵

¹¹ Rosenblatt, *Literature as Exploration*, 5th ed., p. 50.

¹² Ibid., p. 51. See especially the chapter in Louise M. Rosenblatt, *The Reader, the Text, the Poem: The Transactional Theory of the Literary Work*, paperback ed. (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1994) entitled ‘The Quest for “the Poem Itself”’, pp. 101-130.

¹³ Rosenblatt, *Making Meaning*, p. 10.

¹⁴ Rosenblatt, *Literature as Exploration*, 5th ed., pp. 50-51.

¹⁵ Although some have been advocating for the importation of discourse analysis into literary studies, which would align the discipline more with these social scientific ones. See Dominique Maingueneau, ‘Literature and discourse analysis’, *Acta Linguistica Hafniensia*, 42 (2010): 147-58.

As Rosenblatt describes the process of aesthetic reading, the personalist nature of textual sociability begins to emerge. According to Rosenblatt, to evoke a work of art from a textual pattern of symbols, the reader has

to pay attention to the broader gamut of what these words in this particular order [are] calling forth within him: attention to the sound and rhythm of the words in the inner ear, attention to the imprints of past encounters with these words and their referents in differing life and literary contexts, attention to the overtones of feeling, the chiming of sound, sense, ideas, and association.¹⁶

Beyond the emphasis here on the active role of the reader, the distinction of aesthetic reading is that evoking a literary work of art from a text involves tracing ‘the chiming of sound, sense, ideas, and association’ in the ‘inner ear’ – a supremely personal process unique to the individual in question. This is also an activity superfluous to efferent reading, which usually pushes to the background of attention such aspects that are irrelevant to, or which may impede, the rather detached stance that characterises every stage of this mode of reading. Rosenblatt’s writing on aesthetic reading, on the other hand, is saturated by language that recognises the importance of associations the reader experiences in evoking and responding to a work of art – the chiming of different facets of the emerging work in the inner ear. Such chiming represents the stirrings of personalist textual sociability in the literary experience.

As a theorist, Rosenblatt frequently used metaphors to describe the chiming experience in reading; her method reflects her commitment to learning from multiple sources that, to her at least, resonated with her principal preoccupation with the experience of reading among individuals situated in quest. These metaphors were assimilated over a number of decades and

¹⁶ Rosenblatt, *The Reader, the Text, the Poem*, p. 26.

mostly from psychology. By the publication in 2005 of *Making Meaning with Texts*, which features essays ranging from the 1930s to the 1990s, these metaphors appear thoroughly integrated in her writing. While their original introduction in her work was accompanied by references to the original source, subsequent usage is often embedded in her own discourse of reading. From philosophers Charles Sanders Peirce and Ferdinand de Saussure she assimilated the distinction between *sign* and *referent* – the fact that, quoting Peirce, ‘the sign is related to its object only in consequence of a mental association’ – the activity of the interpretant, and thus of a person.¹⁷ The Scandinavian psychologist Ragnar Rommetveit offered Rosenblatt the term ‘associative network’ to denote the process whereby a child (or adult learner) infuses meaning into a referent (100). Meanwhile, from the American psychologist Elizabeth Bates Rosenblatt appropriated the ‘iceberg’ metaphor of language, in which the public aspects of meaning are only the tip to a submerged berg of private elements (4-5). Bates also offered Rosenblatt the metaphor of the ‘mental file drawer’ of associations (76). From the Soviet educator and psychologist Lev Vygotsky, Rosenblatt borrowed the metaphor of a ‘linguistic-experiential reservoir’ that the reader must utilise not only in efferent reading to ascertain the publicly verifiable meanings of words, but also in aesthetic reading to render the transaction as emotionally meaningful as possible (4-5).

These metaphors reinforce Rosenblatt’s belief that it was only when ‘books arouse an intimate *personal* response’ that a ‘developmental process can be fostered’ (67, my emphasis). But to echo my discussion in Chapter 1, one of the potential challenges inherent in these particular metaphors is their analytic overtones (‘network’, ‘reading act’, ‘linguistic-experiential reservoir’) and their origins in a disciplinary discourse somewhat alien to the humanism of literary studies in which Rosenblatt wished to embed herself. It is perhaps for this reason that *Literature as Exploration* was always more popular, especially among teachers of

¹⁷ Rosenblatt, *Making Meaning*, p. 3. The following references to this text are in parentheses in the main body.

English, than *Reader, Text, Poem*, because its discourse was arguably more appropriate to the kind of reading experience she was advocating, within the broader pedagogical trajectory of educating individuals.

Still, I would nevertheless contend that even Rosenblatt's efferent end of the aesthetic-efferent continuum is tempered by its aesthetic counterpart, even if the aesthetic is consciously ignored in the reading act. Because Rosenblatt is concerned with the reading experience as a pathway to learning and to personal growth, *any* kind of reading – whether more efferent or aesthetic – is rescued from either excessive rationalism or irrationalism, both of which Rosenblatt sees as unhelpful to a fruitful pedagogy.¹⁸ In fact, such a distinction echoes the thought of the Russian Slavophile thinker of the nineteenth century, Ivan Kireevsky, who can be considered an influence on the Russian variety of personalism which is especially sympathetic to the approach I am developing in this thesis, where there is a type of reason which is connected to the 'heart' and a type connected to 'logical understanding', but both are called 'reason'.¹⁹ Kireevsky writes of a 'concentration of self-consciousness that is the true locus of supreme truth, and where not abstract reason alone, but the sum total of human intellectual and emotional forces places a single stamp of credibility on the thought that is present to it'.²⁰ I would suggest that Rosenblatt's efferent model of reading is flexible enough to remain connected to the heart – to the emotional dimension of the person – which brings together the 'intellectual' and 'emotional' forces. Indeed, Rosenblatt refuses to discard the efferent from her reading theory; it is simply re-positioned. While she critiqued one kind of efferent reading – one kind of 'abstract rationalism' – she retained and made her own another kind, and as such,

¹⁸ For example, see her chapter, 'Emotion and Reason' in all the editions of *Literature as Exploration*.

¹⁹ Aleksei Khomiakov and Ivan Kireevsky, *On Spiritual Unity: A Slavophile Reader*, trans. and ed. by Boris Jakim and Robert Bird (Hudson, NY: Lindisfarne Books, 1998), p. 22. Kireevsky impacted the later philosopher, Vladimir Solovyov, who was in turn a profound influence on Berdyaev. Kireevsky was also well-read in German idealist philosophy, especially (the late) Schelling, and thus links back to the Romantics with which Rosenblatt was explicitly concerned. The attempt to reconcile subject and object unites all of these thinkers.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 262.

the efferent is an important element in the process of having a literary experience and in delineating the personalist nature of textual sociability within it.

Rosenblatt's transactional theory of the literary work can therefore be divided according to a sequence of broadly aesthetic acts followed by efferent ones, utilising the kind of reason outlined above. By positioning associative thinking within each of these stages, the process of learning at the heart of this reading-response mode can be conceived in terms of personalist textual sociability. The first stage is the initial encounter, where the reader performs the text on the instrument of the self to bring forth an artwork.²¹ But 'even as we are generating the evocation', writes Rosenblatt, 'we are reacting to it; this may in turn affect our choices as we proceed with the reading'.²² 'Reacting to it', I suggest, involves the beginnings of understanding the potential sociability of the literary work in question, whereby the reader becomes conscious of his linguistic-experiential reservoir, or how his network of associations is being repeatedly utilised in mediating between the sign and the referent.²³ For example, when reading a novel, the reader may realise that various prior experiences – encounters with situations or characters in other novels, films, drama, and with real people and non-literary experiences – are being drawn upon in order to make meaning with what the new text is evoking. To be personal for a moment, I read the novel *Daniel Deronda* and I find myself thinking about other adoption experiences in literature – in *Great Expectations*, for example, or in a contemporary novel, like A. M. Homes's *In a Country of Mothers* – and I also think of my own experiences as an adoptee. I begin to create a personalist textual sociability based on what I do with this emerging network of literary and non-literary experiences, guided by the necessity for warranted assertability.

²¹ The performance metaphor will be explored in more detail in the next chapter, but for now, see Rosenblatt, *Literature as Exploration*, 5th ed., pp. 263-77.

²² Rosenblatt, *Making Meaning*, p. 15.

²³ Rosenblatt preferred to talk of sign and referent, even in the 1990s, rather than signifier and signified, because a 'referent' most obviously links the interpretant back to the external world, and thus to the world of society and change: *Literature as Exploration*, 5th ed., p. 49.

‘Warranted assertability’ is Rosenblatt’s ambitious way of stressing the transactional nature of the literary experience, in which both text and reader are important. Eschewing subjectivist reader-response approaches, Rosenblatt drew on John Dewey’s concept of a ‘warranted assertion’ in order to stress the need for criteria of interpretation, which, among other things, would highlight the need to pay attention to the text and avoid an experience which has little to do with the text at hand.²⁴ In *Making Meaning with Texts* she suggests three criteria of interpretation which mean that warranted assertability is active: ‘(1) that the context of and purpose of the reading event, or the total transaction, be considered; (2) that the interpretation not be contradicted by, or not fail to cover, the full text, the signs on the page; and (3) that the interpretation not project meanings which cannot be related to signs on the page’.²⁵ Points two and three do not, however, return to the New Critical notion of ‘the text itself’. On this Rosenblatt is emphatic: ‘I might speak of returning to the text, but that is because the signs on the page are the only observable, empirical aspect shared by readers’.²⁶ Meaning occurs when the reader transacts with the text in a dynamic, to-and-fro fashion which highlights the activity of the reader as interpretant – the mediator between sign and referent – who is thus rooted in a triad of sign, interpretant, and referent, which ensures that each agent is brought into focus.

There are, of course, a number of questions arising from Rosenblatt’s concept of warranted assertability, not least what constitutes the ‘full text’ and whether it is in fact desirable and possible that a reader try and absorb every particular aspect of the text, which might seem to negate the personalist dimension of the literary experience. As I explored in Chapter 1, there is always a danger in Rosenblatt’s work that her faith in scientific method overrides her intuition about the importance of the individual and the complexity of a person’s experience. Surely what seems more important than comprehensiveness or an idea of a ‘total experience’ is that, as

²⁴ Rosenblatt, *Making Meaning*, p. 23.

²⁵ Ibid., pp. 23-24.

²⁶ Ibid., p. xxiv.

Rosenblatt also recognises, a reader enters into conversation with others about his reading and ideas about a text, while at the same time ensuring that such a reader is helped to develop his personal intuitions about a text's meaning and potential importance for himself and possibly for others also.

Next in the sequence of Rosenblatt's stages is 'expressed response', when a reader tries to cognise the way in which the literary work has emerged during his literary experience. But this is not necessarily straightforward, and may include a 're-experiencing, a re-enacting, of the work-as-evoked, and an ordering and elaborating of our responses to it'.²⁷ As a reader crystallises his sense of the literary work and the way in which it has formed in his imagination, he can move into 'expressed interpretation', which is a more concerted effort at delineating the various threads pursued in performing the literary work on the self. At this stage, it will be more important in a classroom setting to enter into discussion with others about literary experiences in order to measure the validity of one's own. If everyone else has concluded, for example, that 'Break of Day' by John Donne focuses on the feeling of adultery provoked by the pull of business, and I decide that the poem is about the virtues of different kinds of love, then I would need to return to the text and 're-experience' it and 're-enact' it according to the new knowledge I have about other people's responses, before I revise my expressed interpretation. I needn't accept what the others say and thereby invalidate what may be a perfectly reasonable reading in which I was receptive to the way I was constructing the literary experience. But I will have listened to others and learned to become more self-critical, whether or not I find some common ground between my own reading and that of others.

Eventually, a reader, at least one who is also a learner, must usually communicate their reading in some way; they must communicate their expressed interpretation, and at more advanced stages in literary studies such an interpretation may appear as a small aspect of a more

²⁷ Rosenblatt, *The Reader, the Text, the Poem*, p. 134.

wide-ranging study, as in a monograph, for example, as well as guiding the overall subject theme of an article or book. In 1968 (some years before reader-response theory) Alan C. Purves and Victoria Rippere published a report for the National Council of Teachers of English called *Elements of Writing about a Literary Work: A Study of Response to Literature* – a text that Rosenblatt continued to reference in *Making Meaning with Texts* almost forty years later.²⁸ Purves and Rippere analyse in great detail the various possible elements a writer about literature can include in their text. However, they refrain from setting up a hierarchy of elements and permit the learner to do this for himself, echoing the difficulty of being too prescriptive about what individuals concentrate on.²⁹ Rosenblatt implicitly capitalises on this position in *Reader, Text, Poem* when she turns her attention to devising criteria applicable to the kind of criticism she believes literary critics should have the freedom to pursue.

Part of the activity at an advanced stage in the reading process, involves, therefore, an attempt to delineate some criteria of interpretation which can direct the writing about a literary work. I may decide I wish to focus on the experience of insular love in *The Rainbow* and the film, *Like Crazy* – historically and generically unrelated – yet when I experience them as ‘literary works’, they seem to coalesce or evidence sociability around this experience of love which gradually insulates a couple from the outside world. The essay’s contribution would be an exploration of insular love by means of a comparative study of two texts linked by the author’s exercise of personalist textual sociability. The criteria of interpretation would therefore adapt to suit this assignment goal.

The process of literary experience outlined above, however, is obviously context-dependent on (1) the reader / learner in question and (2) the transitory factors affecting his reading and study environment. As Rosenblatt understood, readers may simply be bored or

²⁸ Rosenblatt, *Making Meaning*, p. 33.

²⁹ Alan C. Purves and Victoria Rippere, *Elements of Writing about a Literary Work: A Study of Response to Literature* (Urbana, IL: NCTE, 1968), pp. 59-60.

uninterested in understanding their literary experience. As I suggested in Chapter 1, Rosenblatt tried to design courses in which there was some form of bridge between the projected world of a literary work or works and the world(s) of the student(s). But what if the response is still negative and mute? Or what if students actively try and resist a personalist approach? One response for the teacher is to try and understand why this might be. What might be getting in between the reader and the text? Am I as a teacher being overly reflexive about the learning process? Ought I to be subtler in how I pose the task of delineating personalist textual sociability? And am I demonstrating by my behaviour and attitudes that efferent reading is more valuable than aesthetic?

One response to these questions would be to preface the target literary work with other, potentially more accessible literary works or para-literary works such as film adaptations, and then move on from there, as critical literacy often attempts to do.³⁰ These ‘bridge works’ might be suggested by the students, even if it means a slight deviation from the syllabus plan, although sensitive teachers are likely to be aware of popular ‘texts’ which may provide an inroad. Of course, an additional challenge which arises here would be to avoid constructing a subtle hierarchy of texts, or digging one’s heels into a binary of ‘high’ and ‘low’ art forms (see my comments in the Conclusion). Moreover, Rosenblatt suggests that a spontaneous engagement with a literary work is more likely to occur if we ‘avoid placing undue importance upon the particular form in which the expression of the student’s reaction should be couched’.³¹ There should be sufficient flexibility and variety for exploring literary experiences.

Without wishing to anticipate the discussion of Rosenblatt’s Whitmanian literatus in Chapter 3, it is, however, necessary also to allude to her concern for the personal qualities of readers who engage in aesthetic reading. In places her work might be interpreted as being

³⁰ See Ray Misson and Wendy Morgan, *Critical Literacy and the Aesthetic: Transforming the English Classroom* (Urbana, IL: NCTE, 2006).

³¹ Louise M. Rosenblatt, *Literature as Exploration*, 4th ed. (New York: MLA, 1983), p. 67.

somewhat exclusive. The ideal critic, says Rosenblatt, is someone who ‘undoubtedly’ possesses ‘a high degree of sensitivity to verbal nuances and will have devoted much energy to acquiring the capacity for intellectual and emotional self-awareness and self-criticism’.³² The critic should be cultivating ‘a deeply humane personality’ because for Rosenblatt ‘it takes much more than a knowledge of the tradition of the pastoral elegy to do justice to [John Milton’s] “Lycidas” [for example]’.³³ Such a belief in the ideal critic is part and parcel of Rosenblatt’s overall pedagogical approach: she is concerned with the growth of individuals who are able to contribute fruitfully to American society – to creating the kind of environment in which oneself and others can be happy and fulfilled. If the study of literature (and not just Milton!) is to play an important role in society, a personalism which focuses on the transaction between individual and text in a matrix of other forces seems to be vital.

But still, there *is* a tacit aristocratic aspect to Rosenblatt’s thought with which she never really reckoned, perhaps because she was so convinced she was democratic to the core. It is possible that one of the tendencies of philosophies like romanticism, existentialism, and even personalism is that because of their staunch belief in the importance of the individual, a kind of particularism can permeate the application of personalistic approaches. In Berdyaev’s philosophy, for example, he openly acknowledges that his personalism is aristocratic: the growth of the human person is a unique, unrepeatable process and different people will reach different levels of sensitivity, creativity, and other human qualities.³⁴

However, I think Rosenblatt can be absolved from charges of harmful exclusivity; she demonstrates antipathy towards the Nietzschean superman, for example, which seeks to make distinctions between types based on superior qualities.³⁵ If there are some qualities which

³² Rosenblatt, *Reader, Text, Poem*, p. 147.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ See Nicolas Berdyaev, *Dream and Reality: An Essay in Autobiography*, trans. Katharine Lampert (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1950).

³⁵ Rosenblatt, *Literature as Exploration*, 4th ed., p. 166.

people are born with (a disposition towards emotional sensitivity, for example), then for Rosenblatt there are also other qualities which can be developed through literary study, such as attention to nuances, critical thinking, and democratic qualities of conversation and co-operation with others in the classroom. The aesthetic stance also ensures that for Rosenblatt, students will be encouraged to focus as much on what signs might point to in the external world as the formal qualities of signs themselves: literature and life will be conjoined via the personal activity of the reader / learner.

As I stated in the Introduction, Rosenblatt's importance to literary theory, and to my project in particular, substantially derives from the way she developed her theory in an institutional context attuned to developments in pedagogy. In this sense, she can be distinguished from other thinkers of her recent past who also promoted similar ideas about aesthetic reading and its benefits for the individual. In her history of the development of ideas on literary criticism, Carol Atherton rightly aligns Pater and the Oxford critic A. C. Bradley as being of the 'generalist' school of literary individuals, in that they were critics who positioned themselves in opposition to the scholars and literary (historical) scholarship.³⁶ These were authors Rosenblatt had researched for her 1931 doctoral thesis on art-for-art's sake in Victorian writing.³⁷ But whereas Pater and Bradley were reluctant to specify the need for readers to analyse their literary experience in detail, Rosenblatt is insistent on the need for readers – especially those enrolled as students in formal education – to make their literary experience an object of efferent analysis.

For instance, using Virginia Woolf's essay, 'How Should One Read a Book?' (1926) in *Reader, Text, Poem*, Rosenblatt tactically teases Woolf away from her Paterian inference, in

³⁶ Carol Atherton, *Defining Literary Criticism: Scholarship, Authority and the Possession of Literary Knowledge, 1880-2002* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 80.

³⁷ See the chapter on Walter Pater in Louise Rosenblatt, *L'idée de l'art pour l'art dans la littérature anglaise pendant la période victorienne* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1931).

stressing the reader's 'crystallisation' of 'the work as a whole, as a structure that, despite its ethereal nature, can be an object of thought'.³⁸ Rosenblatt uses Woolf to strike a delicate balance between aligning herself with Woolf and the school of critics such as Pater and Bradley who emphasised the private experience of reading literature, and espousing a vision of engaging literature as something that can be trained and communicated to others as expressed interpretation – as 'transactional criticism'. She espouses a kind of rationalism of the heart, to echo Kireevsky, where excessive subjectivism and excessive impersonalism are alike rejected.

Rosenblatt's concept of 'transactional criticism', written by professional critics and students and based on articulated criteria of interpretation, has the potential to be accessible to the 'general reader' and thus impact the world beyond the academy while still ensuring that transactional criticism can be considered 'disciplinary', in the specific sense delineated by Josephine M. Guy and Ian Small as embracing both specialisation and 'social utility'.³⁹ As a suitable goal of literary study, transactional criticism should 'reflect more of the dynamics of reading, reporting it as an event in time, in a particular personal or environing context'.⁴⁰ For although the influence of Pater and Woolf is most obviously visible in Rosenblatt's literary theory, there is also a distinct vision of literary criticism deriving from the Victorian writer, Matthew Arnold, which is committed to engaging with cultural and social change. Rosenblatt's approach might even be traced back to the nineteenth-century Russian Westerniser, Vissarion Belinsky, whom Isaiah Berlin has credited with launching cultural criticism in literary studies – with critiquing a literary work's implicit and explicit values for their social implications.⁴¹ There is a sense of earnestness in Rosenblatt's writing, linked to her tendency to believe in an

³⁸ Rosenblatt, *Reader, Text, Poem*, p. 133.

³⁹ Josephine M. Guy and Ian Small, *Politics and Value in English Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 167.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 149.

⁴¹ Berlin, *Russian Thinkers*, pp. 156-57.

aristocracy of individuals who embody certain human qualities which make them receptive to literary experiences.

The vital difference between Rosenblatt and those who may be considered her early contemporaries – the modernist Arnoldians, such as critics A. R. Orage and John Middleton Murry – however, is that Rosenblatt successfully translated this cultural or contemporary engagement into concrete, curricular terms that directed institutional learning in literary studies in a tangible manner (see Chapter 1 for curricular details).⁴² Although Orage and Murry were concerned to preserve the domain of the non-academic, generalist amateur writing criticism in public magazines, Rosenblatt imported a revised generalist vision into higher education: revised in such a way that transactional literary criticism cultivated specialist skills in aesthetic reading and the successive stages of further literary inquiry – the disciplinary specialisation required by Guy and Small. Whereas Orage and Murry saw themselves as ‘wise’ critics communicating wisdom in their literary criticism and other writings, Rosenblatt’s generalist educative framework goes some way to demystifying this claim to wisdom.⁴³ For Rosenblatt, wisdom is the end-goal of a clearly delineated process of literary experience and replicable literary inquiry, which is not only specialist in the sense that it can be trained, but also of value in communicating insight, via transactional literary criticism, to others, and in nurturing democratic citizens.

Rosenblatt provides the theoretical basis for envisioning textual sociability along personalist lines. By foregrounding aesthetic reading in the transactional literary experience, she emphasises the way in which the interpretant (the reader) makes meaning with signs by drawing on his reservoir of past experiences with what a sign and set of signs might indicate. The transactional approach, by positing a triadic semiotics as opposed to a dyadic one, embeds sociability into its very core. The aesthetic-efferent continuum allows for a dynamic movement

⁴² Atherton, *Defining Literary Criticism*, p. 115.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 116.

among different stances, so that an excessively private and intuitive approach is never advocated, but nor is an excessively detached one which only pays attention to 'public' meanings of words.

When we turn to H.D.'s novel, *The Sword Went Out to Sea*, textual sociability becomes much more metaphorical than it usually is for Rosenblatt. Yet H.D.'s somewhat elliptical way of exploring sociability in consciousness lends itself to a decidedly personalist account of textual sociability and the mental processes involved in navigating a person's reservoir of prior experiences with what new signs indicate. H.D. implicitly extends the discourse of personalist textual sociability by her supremely self-conscious, and thus more personally involved, exploration into ways of knowing linked to aesthetic experiences.

Associational Consciousness in *The Sword Went Out to Sea*

During the Second World War and in the years following it (1940-50) H.D. intensified her interests in psychoanalysis, astrology, spiritualism, and occult symbolism. She came to see herself as an individual whose birth (astrological) and genetic heritage preconditioned her to be interested in visionary, supernatural experiences and the communication of these in art.⁴⁴ The relationship between investigatory, supernatural experiences and the aesthetic experience of art manifested itself in the nature of her writing during the war, when her questing activities found an outlet through her writing, appropriating different genres (journal, historical romance, novel, poetry, and memoir) according to their fitness for the particular experiences she wanted to understand.⁴⁵ Faced with the possibility of annihilation and increasing cultural and social fragmentation during the war years, H.D.'s quest began with herself, responding to the Delphic

⁴⁴ Susan Stanford Friedman, *Psyche Reborn: The Emergence of H.D.* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1981), p. 186.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 176.

oracle: ‘Know Thyself’.⁴⁶ In the early 1940s she worked on a memoir of her psychoanalytic work with Freud in Vienna during 1933 and 1934, and at the same time sought to trace the ‘correspondences’ not only between the self and the universe according to the hermetic mantra, ‘as above, so below’, but also between different philosophical or theoretical models. In the same way that Rosenblatt assimilated ideas from different sources, in the 1940s H.D.’s approach to theoretical development can be summed up by Toril Moi’s assertion that ‘each text I read, regardless of genre, is at work on the same set of problems’.⁴⁷ In tracing the planetary positions and relationships on her astrological natal chart and in pursuing the threads of the unconscious which Freud helped her to unearth, she was trying to gain a degree of self-knowledge or wisdom, which according to her ‘creates a far greater chance of happiness or fulfilment’.⁴⁸

Yet in spite of the complex way in which H.D. synthesised various organising frameworks for individual and cosmic existence, it was her spiritualist activity during the war that most obviously lends itself to theorising textual sociability in relation to aesthetic experience.⁴⁹ From 1943-46 H.D. was engaged in ‘reading’ messages from spirits she believed to be deceased RAF pilots with ties to Air Chief Marshal Lord Hugh Dowding. H.D.’s spiritualist work and her relationship with Dowding form the substance of the memoir *Majic Ring* (written 1943-44), the novel *The Sword Went Out to Sea* (written 1946-47), and to a lesser extent the historical romances, *White Rose and the Red* (written 1947-48) and *The Mystery* (written 1949-51). Although *Majic Ring* contains valuable material relating to H.D.’s spiritualist activity, *Sword* is more overtly concerned with the total context and ramifications

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 193.

⁴⁷ Toril Moi, *What is a Woman?* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 124.

⁴⁸ Friedman, *Psyche Reborn*, p. 193.

⁴⁹ Spiritualist activity seems to have burgeoned during the First World War and continued in Britain into the 1920s. During the Second World War, and especially in London, spiritualist activity was again extremely popular, as Dowding explains in his book, *Many Mansions* (London: New York Rider, 1943). Of course, the occult more generally had been gaining widespread interest among European intelligentsia from the late-nineteenth century onwards.

of this work. My reading of this novel will focus on a series of metaphors H.D. creates in order to explore associational consciousness; my purpose is to position these metaphors as important discursive markers within a theory of personalist textual sociability.

Sword, published for the first time in 2007, has primarily been read by H.D. critics and scholars for its obvious spiritualist and occult themes, which for literary historians tie the text thematically to work by the modernist poet W. B. Yeats and pragmatist philosopher William James.⁵⁰ Although taking the occult theme into account, my aim in this chapter is to read *Sword* as a repository of imagery which I can put into dialogue with Rosenblatt's theory of aesthetic reading, and thus develop a discourse of personalist textual sociability. In this sense I echo Janice S. Robinson's reading of H.D.'s spiritualist work, as being an analogy for a literary process – a position seconded by H.D.'s daughter, Perdita – wherein a séance is commensurable with a 'discussion', a mode of communication.⁵¹ Furthermore, my reading of *Sword* should be read in conjunction with Aaron Bibb's, which links H.D.'s associative and paratactic methods to the genre of 'paranoia-criticism', whereby interpretive connections are sought in order to make sense of the whole gamut of personal experience, and nurture a feeling of harmony in place of unbearable conflict.⁵²

Sword is an intricate, generically hybrid text divided into two books: 'Wintersleep', set in contemporary London, and 'Summerdream', which meanders through historical periods essentially retelling the same relationship narrative recorded in 'Wintersleep', between the protagonist Delia Alton (H.D.) and Lord Howell (Dowding). The backdrop to Delia's

⁵⁰ See especially Suzanne Hobson, 'Credulous Readers: H.D. and Psychic-Research Work' in John Attridge (ed.), *Incredible Modernism: Literature, Trust and Deception* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), pp. 51-65; Elizabeth Anderson, *H.D. and Modernist Religious Imagination: Mysticism and Writing* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013); Timothy Materer, *Modernist Alchemy: Poetry and the Occult* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995).

⁵¹ Janice S. Robinson, *H.D.: The Life and Work of an American Poet* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1982), p. 341. In her writing on William James, Rosenblatt makes no mention of his occult activities.

⁵² Aaron Bibb, 'Vision, Paranoia, and the Creative Power of Obsessive Interpretation', *Journal of Cultural and Religious Theory*, 10 (2010): 99-116. 'Paranoia' in this essay refers to the way individuals like H.D. cannot cope with an actual event (such as war) and seek arcane meanings of the event which they can cope with.

spiritualist activity is that she is preparing notes to lecture on English literature in the U.S; indeed, she ‘was working on the lectures, during the time when the messages [from the airmen] were most compelling’.⁵³ Having inherited an oak tripod table that belonged to the poet William Morris, Delia accords the table significance as it ‘taps’ out messages from the airmen (96).

Morris becomes something of a spectre in *Sword*. Delia’s literary research for her lectures and her engagement with the messages mediated through Morris’s table seem to merge, so that the literary inquiry deviates from more traditional or scholarly forms and simultaneously the spiritualist messages take on an aesthetic, literary quality. Delia claims that in order to decipher the RAF messages, ‘it would need a perceptive ear and to a point, a person trained in rhythm, metre and musical notation’ – qualities traditionally associated with the close reading of poetry and which echo Rosenblatt’s use of the musical word ‘chime’ to describe these reverberations (30). On the other hand, Delia talks of being ‘spared lecturing on poetry in America. Whatever I said, would have been too old-fashioned [...] I had heard personal reminiscences and anecdotes about [Algernon Charles] Swinburne, [Robert] Browning, [Dante Gabriel] Rossetti and William Morris’ (90). Writing in August 1947 to her former husband, Richard Aldington, H.D. thanks him for ‘all the Morris gossip’, and says she is glad she has ‘time now to read and properly browse or “dream” over and into the period’.⁵⁴ Her tone is cautious and is evidence of a desire to avoid an objectively matter-of-fact explication of literature – in this case, of the late Romantics with a strongly individual approach to their art – in favour of a more personal engagement, centred on capitalising on modes of ‘listening’ in both outer and ‘inner’ ears, represented by the musical notation and dreaming, respectively.

⁵³ H.D., *The Sword Went Out to Sea (Synthesis of a Dream)*, by Delia Alton, ed. Cynthia Hogue and Julie Vandivere (Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 2007), p. 35; p. 99. Further references to *Sword* are given in parentheses in the text.

⁵⁴ Caroline Zilboorg (ed.), *Richard Aldington and H.D.: Their lives in letters 1918-1961* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), p. 274.

Delia takes the desire of the airmen to ‘convey something’ seriously, and begins to engage self-consciously in a particular mode of reading and interpretation that utilises aesthetic and associational stances in order to tease out the most from the messages she receives (92). While acknowledging that her reading material isn’t ‘pages of paper’, Delia pares back the reading process to its bare bones: ‘I did know that a single letter or group of letters or numbers, or numbers interspersed with letters, pauses and dashes could express what it would take “pages of paper” to do’ (93). It is at this point that remembrance of the lecture notes becomes significant. Having acknowledged the importance of rhythm and metre (and also rhyme), Delia says that it is ‘the tone of voice, the quality not necessarily the quantity of the words that matter’ (101). Later in the text, in ‘Summerdream’, the aesthetic stance is expressed by the metaphor of a drifting leaf. If a leaf ‘drifts and spins in the air, the answer [to a question – a point of inquiry] is, turn your question round and round, turn it over and over, before you make up your mind’ (180). Delia recognises that the material she reads requires a subtler stance than an excessively efferent one geared at extracting information. Her approach to her ‘literary’ material, firmly aesthetic, seems to seep into how she transacts with the airmen’s messages.

Framing her spiritualist activities in the context of literary inquiry enables us to see Delia’s activity as an instance of aesthetic reading followed by expressed response and expressed interpretation (the text we in turn read). Her research process is one of negotiating textual sociability on a personalistic level: she is concerned with the sociability of her associations to create meaning. In this sense, Delia strikes out on her own to engage in something more personal than that which the lectures offer. One can agree with Friedman in saying that H.D.’s use of psychic phenomena in her art ‘in no sense identifies H.D. with those who equated the outpourings of a medium with art’.⁵⁵ But one can also agree with her when she says that H.D. (and Delia) had to ‘decipher’ and ‘recast’ such material ‘in the consciously

⁵⁵ Friedman, *Psyche Reborn*, p. 197.

controlled codes of art'.⁵⁶ While the messages from the RAF are not in themselves art, in 'turning them over' in her mind and then writing them in *Sword*, Delia is simultaneously aestheticising the material and eliding it with the other literary research she is doing, while also embedding her reading and interpretation into a self-consciously personal journey of exploration. Delia reports how the reading occurred, what techniques she engaged in to arrive at her interpretation, and the significance she accords to the process as part of a broader quest to stop the war, incarnated in the wise, alchemically-rhymed truth that 'Love was eternal, hate was ephemeral. That is what I learned during my illness' (49). Reading Delia's personal account of her reading experiences offers us a different kind of window onto aesthetic experience than reading Rosenblatt; H.D. focuses the lens firmly on herself and in doing so subtly validates in a vulnerable way the efficacy of a personalistic understanding of literary experience.

Stemming from an aesthetic stance to her reading material, Delia represents this learning process leading to wisdom by using three main images, all of which position associational, aesthetic thinking at their heart. Contemplating refugees from France escaping to Britain via a channel tunnel leads Delia to meditate on the metaphorical significance of tunnels as an exploratory medium (51). The 'war was going on in the tunnels', she writes: 'Some had been constructed fairly recently. It seems however, that nobody [except Delia] realized that these latter-day tunnels were built over a series or layer of extinct or "dead" tunnels', and 'under the "dead" tunnels, there were still others' (52). Delia is not explicit about what these 'dead' tunnels are precisely, other than that somehow they are buried beneath the 'the underground' in London and its "'shelter" life' (53).

The importance of the tunnels lies in their eventual point of access to a 'bee-hive', which is H.D.'s second image. Delia describes the 'bee-hive' as a repository for 'all the

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 198.

treasures of the world'. Significantly, 'there was a printing-press and a store of "lost" books. The press was used for re-printing and distributing manuscripts' (53). The presence of 'lost' books may refer to those that were destroyed in the war to salvage paper or potentially to those that were refused publication due to paper shortages and so 'lost' in the sense of having never existed.⁵⁷ Either way, their outward presence is not what preoccupies Delia; she is more interested in their inner capacity to heal and restore – in how they materialise or 're-print' their lost treasure in her mind. The bee-hive consists of multiple rooms or cells of which Delia only concerns herself with one: 'The light in the room was given out by the stones [...] I was supposed to stay here till I got well' (53). The presence of a dwelling place 'at the very centre of the earth', reachable through 'dead tunnels', and that somehow facilitates a healing process involving reading material, foregrounds the personal, private, almost incubatory nature of this experience (53). The tunnels represent a mental map that the individual journeys into, and yet the bee-hive with its reading material stresses the transactional, dynamic nature of this quest. The healing properties of the bee-hive intimate the restorative nature of Delia's transaction with her reading material.

Commensurable with the bee-hive and the tunnels leading to it is Delia's insistence that 'life advances in a spiral', encapsulated in the image of a spiral-shell (40-41), which is H.D.'s third image. By turns a spiral-shell and a carapax (akin to a tortoise's shell), the image foreshadows Helen's quest in *Helen in Egypt* (1961) to 're-integrate' the soul, which resonates with H.D.'s broader modernist project of finding ways of rebuilding civilization in the aftermath of destruction.⁵⁸ In this particular scene of H.D.'s epic poem, Theseus tells Helen to 'rest' and to 'disappear into the web, / the shell, re-integrate, / nor fear to recall' the violence of war she has experienced.⁵⁹ Simultaneously a 'carapax enclosing the soul' and a spiral, a

⁵⁷ See H.D., *Collected Poems 1912-1944*, ed. Louis L. Martz (New York: New Directions, 1983), p. 518.

⁵⁸ H.D., *Helen in Egypt* (New York: New Directions, 1961), p. 170.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

meandering tunnel, Delia tells her readers that the shell is an analogy for ‘the soul’s progress’, perhaps echoing the sense of spiritual quest depicted in works such as John Bunyan’s *The Pilgrim’s Progress*.

In their essay on metaphors for wisdom inquiry, Fraser and Hyland-Russell affirm the spiral nautilus shell as a ‘generative metaphor of wisdom’.⁶⁰ According to these authors, the spiral nautilus shell ‘is constructed as a series of chambers that lead deeper into further chambers, spiralling around the inner self’, and as such, ‘can be a profound metaphor for the deepening awareness and integration of one’s personal, relational, and cultural stories’.⁶¹ Importantly, while the spiral nautilus proceeds inward, the ‘chambers also open outward, connecting the inner creature with the surrounding sea’.⁶² This dialectic between the self and other (the sea) chimes with Delia’s concept of personality, whereby the more individual people become, ‘the more they will grow to resemble one another’ and thus ‘integrate’ (67). The symbiotic relationship between self and other in *Sword* prefigures my discussion in Chapter 3 of relationships between people, or the place of diversity within unity which a theory of personalist textual sociability encourages. This theory’s particular vision of human relations accords with established personalist concepts of unity – such as Kireevsky’s sense that ‘integral’ modes of knowing centred in the heart are conducive to fostering unity among people more generally.⁶³ For now, it is sufficient to say that Delia’s understanding of aesthetic experience seems intimately tied to the kind of personal growth Rosenblatt was advocating in explicit terms. But how precisely does such growth occur? The bee-hive and the spiral-shell or carapax are figured as healing spaces where a person journeys inwards in order to integrate internally and externally.

⁶⁰ Wilma Fraser and Tara Hyland-Russell, ‘Searching for Sophia: Adult Educators and Adult Learners as Wisdom Seekers’, *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, 131 (2011): 25-34, p. 29.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Khomiakov and Kireevsky, *On Spiritual Unity*, p. 22.

The experience of being in the bee-hive cell transliterates into aesthetic transactions later in the text, which encourage Delia to pursue ‘traces of direction’, or associative networks spiralling around the ‘inner self’. It is at this point that H.D.’s language most explicitly weaves itself into a discourse of personalist textual sociability, allowing the previous three images to integrate themselves into the implications of pursuing ‘traces of direction’ – a process that journeys into the tunnels of the literary experience and spends time in the healing space of the bee-hive, with its repository of literary reverberations. The chapter ‘Traces of Direction’ shifts the setting from London to 1946 Lugano, Switzerland, where Delia is staying at the *Pensione Ghirlanda* (109). The theme of reading messages from dead airmen is carried over in spirit through Delia’s consistent transactional stance to her environment. Seated in the hotel drawing-room, Delia begins to transact aesthetically with objects in her surroundings. Fragrances can be ‘apprehended’ but perhaps initially not ‘understood’ (109). Through associative links, ‘we can relate or compare this fragrance to others. It evokes emotions and we can accept or dismiss the scenes, the places, the rooms, the people that we associate with this flower’ (109-110). Such associations are fished from the ‘motes of memory’, which can sometimes be ‘unpredictable’ (113). As a homophone of ‘moat’, ‘mote’ evokes both the depth and the specificity of the memories sought after. A floral fragrance is not a ‘text’ in Rosenblatt’s sense of the word; what Delia (H.D.) does for us is to generalise the evocation, associational, and selective attention stages to other forms of aesthetic transaction that draw upon the reservoir or ‘moat’ of personal, ‘mote’-like experiences. In other words, the strength of H.D.’s imagery is precisely in its nebulousness, refracted through the personality. Embedded into a discourse of personalist textual sociability, it permits learners, as Fraser and Hyland-Russell say, to engage closely with the process as they allow the metaphorical language to bring them closer to the personal experience of the aesthetic transaction.

From the fragrance of flowers Delia moves her attention to a table positioned near her with four square tiles affixed to the table top. Transacting with the artwork on the tiles ‘recalls’ a number of things in Delia’s mind (112-113). She ‘finds’ a ‘thread’ and follows it ‘through the labyrinth’, echoing the tunnels of earlier passages that lead to the regenerative bee-hive (113). As Friedman implies, this quest or journey through labyrinthine tunnels requires a different mental stance to an excessively efferent extraction of logical inferences from one experience to another. Echoing the psychoanalytic and astrological method, Friedman writes that ‘each seeker must leave behind for a time the rational thought processes of the conscious mind to let the spontaneous play of free association restore fragments of the unconscious’.⁶⁴ H.D. was undoubtedly influenced by Freud (see Chapter 4 and below), but in *Sword* she uses a principle of psychoanalytic therapy and astrological exploration – association – in order to organise her experiences, marshalling them to make sense of a particular stimulus with which she is currently in aesthetic transaction.

The ‘play of free association’ is very much organised play rather than Rosenblatt’s disorganised ‘revery [*sic*]’, which is spoken of with contempt when it escapes warranted assertability.⁶⁵ Akin to Rosenblatt’s commitment to selective attention, Delia talks of ‘accepting’ or ‘dismissing’ various elements of association that come to mind in a given transaction. When Delia says of a connection, ‘It may seem a far cry’ (114), or, ‘historically, I may be quite wrong’ (116), this is not so much an embrace of pure subjective free-play, but a reflection on the different criteria of interpretation needed according to an aesthetic transaction undertaken. Delia recognises that the material she is dealing with is prompting the kind of experience Rosenblatt would claim is aesthetic or ‘literary’: the evocation of the aesthetic requires thought processes that use a different mindset to historicism. It is a preference for

⁶⁴ Friedman, *Psyche Reborn*, p. 195.

⁶⁵ Rosenblatt, *The Reader, the Text, the Poem*, p. 29.

organising experience by ‘emotional time’ rather than ‘clock time’. In contrast to a diachronic historicism, Delia welcomes the far-flung ‘cry’ echoing or ‘chiming’ in the spiral nautilus sea-shell, of a synchronic, associational dialogism between ‘personal, relational, and cultural stories’.⁶⁶ In a sense, the cry heard in ‘emotional time’ rather than ‘clock time’ foreshadows the manifestation of ‘the Visitor’ in *The Mystery* who helps the individual to ‘veer round’ so that they are ‘uncanonically seated’ (see below). Moreover, H.D.’s preference for dream time over clock time resonates with Woolf’s distinction between ‘clock time’ and ‘emotional time’ in *The Common Reader* (1929).⁶⁷ For both Woolf and H.D., who draw on the French philosopher, Henri Bergson, a central conviction seems to be that these two modes of time represent different ways of organising experiences: either by the ‘dry facts’ of ‘clock time’, or by the ‘moments of being’ that are more subjectively felt and meaningful to the self.⁶⁸ Rather than ‘emotional’ or ‘dream’, I think the term ‘existential time’ seems to encapsulate both meanings more adequately, without suggesting that the intellect is void in such a framework. Existential time underscores the personal nature of the time in which experiences are connected.

The second book of *Sword* pursues theses ‘traces of direction’ through a method Delia refers to as ‘pleated folds’: the Dowell-Delia relationship and the activity of transacting with material manifests or is assembled in different folds of time which are organised emotionally or personalistically rather than objectively. ‘Summerdream’ is therefore a ‘spiritual map’ of personalist textual sociability that contains ‘various layers of experience, different lives, if you will or manifestations of the same life’ (215). It is also a map that is ‘accordion-pleated – it was pleated anyway, yet laid flat’. The flatness of the pleats is significant because of its

⁶⁶ Fraser and Hyland-Russell, ‘Searching for Sophia’, p. 29.

⁶⁷ For Woolf, see Virginia Woolf, *The Common Reader* (London: Hogarth Press, 1929), p. 189. For H.D., see H.D., ‘H.D. by Delia Alton’, *The Iowa Review*, 16 (1986): 180-221, p. 219.

⁶⁸ Atherton, *Defining Literary Criticism*, p. 106. See Bryony Randall, *Modernism, Daily Time and Everyday Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

horizontal terrain that permits both writer and reader to crawl horizontally, like a crab, along various associational, spiral-shell echoes. 'Historically', we may be quite wrong in connecting 'various layers of experience', but if the criteria have changed for an adequate 'reading', then these become important based on their ability to nurture or 'consecrate' and 'concentrate' the quest for personal and social transformation (215). The 'pictures' that surface through understanding the aesthetic experience 'sometimes seem to be made up of unrelated segments [as in some astrological and psychoanalytic readings], yet they spell something' (215). This is both 'spell' in the literacy sense but also in the magical, active sense of construing or moulding meaning. For Rosenblatt they would be one and the same thing, given her emphasis on the reader's selective activity in making meaning.

As a theory of personalist textual sociability is forming, it is worth pausing to underscore its central aspects. The main concept of the discourse is the importance of associational thinking in evoking a literary work of art from a text and in then ascertaining a text's sociability, or mapping a landscape of further research based on the resonance of various experiential echoes, literary and non-literary, in a person's 'inner ear'. Rosenblatt's language is more scientific in places, and can at times lead away from the personalist, imaginative journey of the process that holds learning (the quest for wisdom) at its heart. H.D., on the other hand, developed a personal praxis of questing after wisdom, based on the synthesis of various theoretical or philosophical frameworks, such as psychoanalysis, astrology, and spiritualism (to name a few). In her work from the Second World War, she deploys a range of images to communicate her investigative processes, many of which positioned, albeit elliptically, aesthetic experience at their heart. Transacting with verbal and visual stimuli (messages from dead pilots and pictures in a hotel drawing-room), H.D.'s protagonist, Delia Alton, journeys into a series of tunnels that lead her to a bee-hive or spiral-shell in which she traces various associations or directions the aesthetic experience is calling forth within her. As Fraser and

Hyland-Russell suggest, the richness of this imagery lies in its connection to learning processes, which for H.D. were conducted during a time of psychological and social upheaval. It is as if her imaginative language is deployed as a method of finding beauty and personal equilibrium at a time of constant threat of annihilation and anonymity. H.D.'s personalistic language therefore draws out the fragility and importance of the learning process and the aesthetic experience at the heart of it.

The important move that both Rosenblatt and H.D. allow me to make is to allow the individual to legislate their own textual map based on recognising the validity of their unique personal experiences. It is in this sense that textual sociability is personalist; it cannot be created by another. That H.D.'s contribution is itself manifestly personal merely underscores the fundamental change which I am trying to highlight – a move away from finding sociability 'out there', in a broad context and which is typically authorised by somebody else, to finding it within, in transaction with a given text at a given moment, and thus, to anticipate the work of Peter Barry, evoking a deep context in existential time.⁶⁹

In the next section, I pursue the overall theme of personalist textual sociability by looking at case studies of individuals who are situated in quest and who engage in forms of personalist textual sociability as part of this quest. For H.D., *The Mystery* depicts an extended metaphor of a meeting between questors in a cathedral, which I read as a more fundamental metaphor for the literary experience and a process of learning. In both H.D.'s novel and in the work of Rosenblatt's colleague, Gordon Pradl, personalist textual sociability tightly links textual associations with actual human relations, thus further underscoring the connections between literature and life highlighted in Chapter 1. For H.D., love between people is representative of an illuminating aesthetic experience, whereas for Pradl, democratic relations

⁶⁹ On 'broad' and 'deep' contexts, see Peter Barry, *Literature in Contexts* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012), p. 26.

between students offer opportunities for learners to gain a better understanding of their own literary experiences, and thus of the possibilities for personalist textual sociability.

Personalist Textual Sociability in Practice: Case Studies

Engaging the Visitor in the Cathedral in *The Mystery*

Referred to by H.D. as her ‘dear Prague story’, *The Mystery* is the stepping-stone between H.D.’s World War Two writing and her epic poem, *Helen in Egypt* (1960), in that this short novel continues themes explored previously in *Majic Ring* and *Sword*, while foreshadowing events in *Helen*.⁷⁰ In the mid-late 1940s H.D. pursued historical romance as a genre in which she could explore relationships and experiences important to her, but in a way that removed them somewhat through a mode of ‘aesthetic distance’.⁷¹ In fact, this kind of layering implies the palimpsest – a concept which is particularly vital to H.D. and which will be explored in more detail in the next chapter. By distancing her experiences through embedding them in historical fiction, H.D. was not trying to detach herself from their intimacy in her life; but, as Rosenblatt believed, this mode of aesthetic distancing can allow the reader (or author) to effectively manage their experiences in a secure way, without becoming too emotionally involved, insecure, or distressed, and thus run the risk of not gaining anything at all by dwelling on them.⁷² As with other aspects of H.D.’s work and Rosenblatt’s thought, taken separately, this emphasis on aesthetic distance is not original to these thinkers; yet my task is to bring together multiple facets of their work and weave them into a theoretical intervention which addresses contemporary concerns in literary theory. In that sense, aesthetic distance is an important feature of their work.

⁷⁰ Quoted in H.D., *The Mystery*, ed. Jane Augustine (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2010), p. 126. Further references to this text are given in parentheses in the main body.

⁷¹ Louise M. Rosenblatt, ‘Pattern and Process – A Polemic’, *The English Journal*, 58 (1969): 1005-1012, p. 1007.

⁷² Rosenblatt, *Literature as Exploration*, 4th ed., p. 205.

The historical romances of the Delia-Lord Howell dyad in the ‘Summerdream’ section of *Sword* materialise in *The Mystery* through the highly spiritualised meeting of the protagonist, Count Louis Saint-Germain (1696?-1784), and Elizabeth de Watteville. This Elizabeth is the fictional persona of the historical Elisabeth von Watteville (born 1754), granddaughter of Nikolaus Louis, Count von Zinzendorf (1700-1760), who was the founder of the Moravian Church or the ‘Moravian-Slavic Church’ (111). While a story about Zinzendorf and the Moravian Church echoes H.D.’s memoir of her Moravian childhood, *The Gift*, written in London from 1941-43, *The Mystery* transcends *The Gift* in using Moravianism to present a more substantial message about the capacity of love to be victorious over conflict. The story essentially relates Saint-Germain’s initiation into the Moravian ‘Mystery’, which is being investigated by Elizabeth and her cousin, Henry Dohna. Set just before Christmas on the eve of the French Revolution, the novel’s mood is tense: all three characters have retreated to Prague, and particularly to the Cathedral of St. Vitus (known for its healing properties), because they are in quest of insight that will allow them to proceed with their lives in a more fulfilled way.

The significance of *The Mystery* in the context of this thesis is threefold, and each aspect will be explored in turn. Firstly, *The Mystery* is overtly concerned with the experience of being in quest, and the ways in which associations enhance this quest. Secondly, the novel continues a metaphor which repeatedly appears in H.D.’s work, and which I argue symbolises a specific mode of associational consciousness characterised by peaceful, egalitarian connections, and which can be folded into the overall development of personalist textual sociability. Finally, both the actual human relations in the novel, and the deeper metaphorisation process at work, lend themselves to a pedagogically inflected exploration of personalist textual sociability.

Having stated that all three principal characters in the novel are situated in quest, the Cathedral of St. Vitus becomes a place of healing for Saint-Germain, who is disguised as

Brother Antonius and is working in ‘Pedagogy’ in the Castle complex as ‘consultant to the Castle Library’ (12) and ‘Keeper of the Archives’ (58). Echoing the regenerative space of the bee-hive in *Sword*, the Cathedral of St. Vitus becomes a place of healing when Saint-Germain experiences ‘the Visitor’ who causes him to ‘veer round’. As a Moravian, Elizabeth is part of the *Jednota Bratrská*, which is the Czech title for the Church, and which means ‘association’. A member of a loving association, Elizabeth moves into Saint-Germain’s life in the Cathedral and causes him to ‘veer round’ (21).

As a story set before Christmas, the character of the Visitor who moves into a human’s life is strongly connected to the Nativity or the Incarnation. By setting the story just before Christmas, H.D. echoes her earlier poem *The Flowering of the Rod* (written 1944), in which the woman’s transformation from the conflated Mary of Bethany / Mary Magdalene to the Virgin herself culminates in the Nativity and the adoration of the Magi at Epiphany – the coming of the visitors to the woman formerly tainted by the suspicion of conceiving out of wedlock, but who is now vindicated and in possession of the Messiah. In the same way that Mary is transformed with the help of multiple visitations in the poem, Saint-Germain in *The Mystery* is positioned as an ‘initiate’ or learner who, through a state of receptive consciousness, is transformed by encountering the Visitor in the temple or cathedral.

Yet while the novel depicts the actual act of two people meeting in a cathedral, it is important also to view the meeting in the cathedral on a more metaphorical level, as indicative of a specific mode of consciousness connected with existential time. While H.D. is keen to assert a particular mode of human association in her story, between Saint-Germain and Elizabeth (whom Saint-Germain believes to be the Holy Spirit), she also seems to link this actual encounter to an essential image in her wider work, which underscores her tendency to advocate the importance of associational thinking.

In H.D.'s work the image of a temple can manifest as different buildings (house, chapel, cathedral, shrine etc.), but their variety should not detract from the central effect.⁷³ The temple is repeatedly invoked (in *Paint it Today*, *Pilate's Wife*, *Majic Ring*, *Bid Me to Live*, and *Helen in Egypt*) as a meeting place for lovers or friends who come together to create a different kind of existence, often with a different appreciation of time, to one witnessed in the outside world, which is frequently characterised by conflict or violence.⁷⁴ Janice Robinson's work shows that according to H.D.'s imagism, which she developed from 1911 onwards but which she carried over into her later work in less obvious forms, the image of the temple is simultaneously a reference to human consciousness (*tempora*).⁷⁵ The mode of human association played out inside the temple is therefore, in imagist aesthetics, also a specific kind of consciousness.

As a metaphor for the literary experience, the meeting of two individuals in a temple represents an image of a particular form of associational consciousness, which organises experiences very much along the lines of the transactional literary experience. In other words, the meeting of lovers in the temple and its more underlying indication of associational consciousness favours existential time over clock time, mapping associations through the pleated folds of time, discovering and delineating these connections at the same time, and, most fundamentally, they are done so through concrete personalities.

The aesthetics of H.D.'s imagism is characterised by a specific mode of association that mirrors the human relationships and the mode of consciousness they inaugurate. Robinson explains the way early critics of imagism understood its mechanics: May Sinclair, for example, wrote in 1915 that imagism

⁷³ In H.D.'s papers at Yale there is also a drawing by H.D. of a small church edifice set apart.

⁷⁴ A similar phenomenon occurs in Rebecca West's *The Return of the Soldier* (1918), in which a couple create a new world for themselves in a little house on Monkey island – a love which triumphs over war. As far as I know, H.D. was not influenced by West's novel. Robinson does show, however, that H.D. may have responded to D. H. Lawrence's *The Man Who Died* (1929) and *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928), both of which focus on a passion between a man and a woman in a remote, secluded shelter.

⁷⁵ Robinson, *H.D.*, p. 383.

is not Symbolism...the Image is not a substitute; it does not stand for anything but itself. Presentation not Representation is the watchword of the school. The Image, I take it, [...] is form *and* substance... And in no case is the Image a symbol of reality (the object); it is reality (the object) itself.⁷⁶

The mode of consciousness the lovers initiate in the temple is at the same time a reality for them in their physical and emotional union: the temple *is tempora*. H.D.'s images need to be read as presentations, as materialisations of an experience – in this case, the initiation of a new type of consciousness based on reconfigured associations between actual people. For Robinson, the feminism of H.D.'s imagism lies in its non-violent aesthetics: that one thing does not 'stand for' another thing (56). As 'presentations of a situation', H.D.'s images are existential and synchronistic: by presenting her experience in images, she moves away from 'historical process', because the aesthetics of imagism have a horizontal, egalitarian, or levelling dynamic, characterised by equality, rather than the vertical or hierarchical, substitutionary dynamic of older forms of metaphorical imagination and writing. Her imagist aesthetics prefigure the 'pleated folds' of time in *Sword*, which are laid flat. It is important to see that what Robinson says about H.D.'s feminist aesthetics can also be applied to H.D.'s mode of thinking: a non-violent associative consciousness permits the individual to map a landscape of textual sociability which is not forced from without, but somehow seems germane to the person in question, and is, therefore, deeply personalist.

To take a concrete example, using the discourse I have developed above: in a previous piece of literary criticism I undertook I intuited and then analysed textual sociability within and between George Eliot's *Middlemarch* and Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, in the

⁷⁶ Quoted in *ibid*, p. 99, original emphasis. Subsequent references to this text are given in parentheses in the main body.

context of exploring the religious influences in the personal creativity of the literary hostess, Ottoline Morrell. Through a chiming in my inner ear, I focused on the similarities between the experiences and personalities of Dorothea Brooke and Ottoline, and on the existential situation of being depicted in art in *Dorian Gray* and in Ottoline's memoirs and journals. H.D.'s metaphor of the temple as consciousness which inaugurates a new, peaceful mode of association between people richly expresses the way I brought texts together based on a revised understanding of context – away from a top-down, historically verifiable link between texts and individuals, toward an inner, more personalist and existential connective landscape. There was a meeting in the temple of my consciousness, between Dorothea Brooke, *Dorian Gray*, and Ottoline Morrell, in the context of a given experience which I argued was existentially similar. The value of H.D.'s metaphor is its ability to capture the personalist nature of this form of sociability: the association is characterised by a form of love – a peaceful, non-violent form of sociability which germinates in the *tempora* of the personal reader.

By arguing that H.D.'s imagism was heavily influenced by her early Moravian upbringing, however, Robinson opens the path for further work dealing with H.D.'s interest in Moravian praxis and theology in relation to imagery. Consulting historical sources, Robinson glosses Moravianism as a 'culture that is more attuned to love than to power' (83). Members of the Church are part of a 'community of shared experience, of shared symbolism, of a common language about the experience of life' (83). Such 'language' is governed by the logic of 'the imagination and passions rather than reason' – a point which echoes Friedman's comment about H.D.'s psychoanalytic and astrological modes of thinking (86). Effectively more attuned to existential time than clock time, Moravians believe, significantly, that a state of living in peace with others 'depend[s] upon the creation of another world of consciousness' to that governed by power, reason, and oppression (113). Recalling the image of two lovers meeting in a temple, in *The Mystery* H.D. frames the meeting in explicit pedagogical terms

because she is also alluding to her extended metaphor of the temple as consciousness. The ‘veering round’ which Elizabeth initiates in the Cathedral is both an actual veering round, but also a more abstract one, concerned with a development in thought. In other words, I am suggesting that it is precisely the associational consciousness indicated in H.D.’s imagery that is particularly conducive to the kind of learning process symbolised by veering round.

There are two aspects to the veering round that propel Saint-Germain forward in his quest. The first is that he comes to realise the significance of the Visitor, and the pattern of events that have led to this transformation. As someone trained ‘to watch, to wait, to assemble the particulars to match like a trained worker in mosaic, the various fragments’, Saint-Germain’s academic training and work in Pedagogy is used to effect in helping him to trace the directions which Elizabeth-as-Visitor has evoked in his mind (62). Yet if we take into account other encounters in temples in H.D.’s work, we can see that the location is also significant, and represents a performance of a hidden mental process. As an imagist aesthetic, Saint-Germain’s meeting with a Visitor in the Cathedral of St. Vitus enacts a mental process akin to personalist textual sociability. As a metaphor for the literary experience, the encounter with the Visitor in the temple or *tempora* encourages a process designed to enunciate the various links – the chiming of particular associations in the inner ear. Mapped onto Rosenblatt’s concepts, the Visitor can be those aspects of a literary experience that especially resonate with the reader. A reader transacts with a work and encounters multiple Visitors, which help him to veer round on a given topic personal to him. Although of course, the Visitor might also be an educational mentor who enters the temple of the literary experience with the reader.

That the Visitor might be a mentor of sorts is especially pertinent when we consider that H.D. used ‘veering round’ to describe her response to Freud’s involvement in her psychoanalysis in the 1930s.⁷⁷ H.D. is lying on the analysand’s couch in Freud’s consulting

⁷⁷ H.D., *Tribute to Freud* (New York: New Directions, 2012), p. 14.

room in Vienna, and, she says, ‘for myself, I veer round, uncanonically seated stark upright with my feet on the floor’. That ‘veering round’ and being ‘uncanonically seated’ are spoken in the same breath is significant. As a mode of transformation, veering round is inherently linked to a change in the status quo. Miranda B. Hickman has related H.D.’s feeling of being canonically displaced to her outsider position in literary history.⁷⁸ But can we not also say that in the context of *The Mystery* and in light of the echo of *Tribute to Freud*, to ‘veer round’ and be ‘uncanonically seated’ is also to be grounded in a different orientation to historical process more generally? As a mentor, Freud helps H.D. to free associate using a psychoanalytic method to free herself of rational control and to organise her experiences in what seems to H.D. to be an ‘uncanonical’ way. This is both substantive, in terms of what becomes the focus of attention, and also an ethical move that displaces H.D.’s thinking from historical precedents.

Thus, *The Mystery* also affirms the relationship between personalist textual sociability and the overall, ethical direction of learning. Elizabeth and Henry are in Prague to research ‘the eternal pre-existing Plan to bring heaven on earth’, which was carried to the United States by their grandfather, Zinzendorf, in 1741 (132). As a Moravian born in the place (Bethlehem, PA) the Moravians consecrated on Christmas Eve 1741, H.D. layered her own quest to discover her heritage in that of the Moravian cousins in *The Mystery*. Opposed to conflict, violence, and war, H.D. and the Moravians orient veering round as a learning process by which the individual comes to appreciate the need for multi-ethnic identification and peace among different peoples (see Chapter 3 for more on pluralism): this is the essence of the ‘Mystery’.

Indeed, such a need for peaceful unity is strongly reminiscent of the wisdom found in passages of Isaiah in the Bible that connect a shelter edifice to associations among people based on love in a time of war. Bereft of their home by violence, the Israelites are compared to ‘a

⁷⁸ Miranda B. Hickman, “‘Uncanonically Seated’: H.D. and literary canons” in Nephie J. Christodoulides and Polina Mackay (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to H.D.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 9-22.

cottage in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers' (Isa. 1:8).⁷⁹ And yet it is in such a situation that they become receptive to the promise of the Visitor: 'there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots' (Isa. 11:1). By linking the arrival of the Visitor to a veering round to values based on peace and harmony, the underlying 'spirit' pervading the process in Isaiah is one of 'rest' (Isa. 11:10). It is likely that H.D. was familiar with such Biblical passages, given that her Moravianism presented believers as a 'remnant' who hold fast to true values.

If we recall the aesthetics of H.D.'s imagism, which are based on principles of non-violence – eschewing substitution and 'historical process' in favour of a timeless presentation of synchronistic experiences – then the connection between the various modes of association she explores through her images and the learning outcomes at the end of the process seems intricately developed. The basis for connecting peoples and experiences as a learner 'uncanonically seated' is mirrored in the learning transformation or veering round, centred on egalitarian or levelling principles of justice, peace, and rest.

The Mystery develops the insights drawn from *Sword* because it is a story concerned with individuals situated in quest, who undergo some form of transformation. H.D.'s imagery, both in *Sword* and in *The Mystery* provides a necessary personalisation of Rosenblatt's more abstract concepts concerning aesthetic reading and the literary experience. And yet, Rosenblatt is able to tease out the broader implications of H.D.'s intricate aesthetic work. But rather than returning to Rosenblatt for further instances of personalist textual sociability at work, I am going to focus on its applicability by turning briefly to the work of her colleague, Gordon Pradl.

Pradl applies Rosenblatt's transactional theory to thinking about the dynamics of classroom learning, where the instructor's authority is of particular interest. Pradl continues the theme of egalitarian relationships between people while also defending the transactional

⁷⁹ Biblical quotations are taken from the Authorized version.

literary experience from some negative aspects of various contextual and reader-response approaches, which for Pradl seemed to tower over literary theory during the early- to mid-1990s. Pradl makes the necessary link between particular approaches to contexts and the political implications in actual classroom environments. Indeed, Pradl helps to crystallise the link between a certain way of knowing, which I have articulated as personalist textual sociability, and concrete politics between people – a theme which is developed more extensively in the next chapter.

Democratic Learning, Literary Associations, and Contextualisms

Gordon Pradl, whose work is the principal subject of this section, first met Rosenblatt in the mid-1960s when he took an MA in English Education at NYU, before moving to Harvard to undertake his doctorate. He moved back as staff to NYU for Rosenblatt's final year before her retirement, in 1972. Pradl's engagement with Rosenblatt's work has been consistently focused on her interest in democracy; indeed, he extends our understanding of Rosenblatt at the same time as creating his own pedagogy based on her theories.⁸⁰ Distancing her from reader-response theorists in the 1980s, Pradl has tried to show how her philosophy of transactional reading has an intricate relationship to how the teaching and learning of literature should proceed.

His book, *Literature for Democracy: Reading as a Social Act* was published primarily for teachers of English in 1996, and builds explicitly on Rosenblatt's work, especially *Literature as Exploration*, coinciding with the publication of its fifth edition in 1995. In this book, Pradl separates Rosenblatt from reader-response, shows how she anticipates the cultural critics emerging at the time; and finally, how her emphasis on the individual is nevertheless

⁸⁰ For example, see Gordon M. Pradl, 'Reading Literature in a Democracy: The Challenge of Louise Rosenblatt' in John Clifford (ed.), *The Experience of Reading: Louise Rosenblatt and Reader-Response Theory* (Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook, 1991), pp. 23-46; and Gordon M. Pradl, 'Reading and Democracy: The Enduring Influence of Louise Rosenblatt', *The New Advocate*, 9 (1996): 9-22.

embedded in a more profound discourse about the importance of negotiation, collaboration, and compromise among individuals constructing a democracy together. Drawing on my discussion in earlier sections of this chapter, I want to show how Pradl's work can negotiate the varieties of contextualisms based on its indebtedness to the transactional theory of the literary work and the democratic framework underpinning this. Pradl helps to position personalist textual sociability as a form of contextualism which has greater potential to foster democratic relations among actual people. For now I shall take 'democracy' as self-evident, but in the next chapter I will examine in more detail Rosenblatt's commitment to democracy and pluralism.

Methodologically, Pradl is confessional about his own struggles as a teacher: his book maintains a 'personal angle to help other teachers of literature to reflect on their own practice'.⁸¹ In the words of the late-twentieth-century American philosopher of education and one-time student of Rosenblatt, Maxine Greene, Pradl moves from the 'close to the distant, the particular to the general without the risk of losing [himself] in the large abstractions that are so often confused with certainties' (see Chapter 4 for more detailed discussion of Greene's work).⁸² Throughout his book, Pradl's tone is gentle, honest, and self-reflective; by confessing vulnerability regarding his particular struggles as a teacher, he is relinquishing any claims to ultimate authority on the 'distant' subject of teaching and learning in English. Whereas Dressman's and Webster's observation about Rosenblatt's *Literature as Exploration* was that her tone was more collegial than in her later work, Pradl's collegiality is more evident than

⁸¹ Gordon M. Pradl, *Literature for Democracy: Reading as a Social Act* (Portsmouth, NH: Boynton / Cook, 1996), p. xi. Further references to this text are given in parentheses in the main body.

⁸² Maxine Greene, *Releasing the Imagination: Essays on Education, the Arts, and Social Change* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2000), p. 68.

both of Rosenblatt's major books and indeed, he seems at times to be a more obviously personalistic thinker than Rosenblatt.⁸³

Writing in the mid-1990s, Pradl was conscious of the rise of contextual approaches to literary study, which superseded deconstruction as an approach which was concerned to look at a text's sociability in greater detail. Indeed, I would argue that at the institutional level, contextual approaches remain dominant as critical approaches, both in teaching and in research.⁸⁴ And yet, as far as Pradl saw things:

contextual approaches dominated by the teacher's [or critic's] display of knowledge can quickly yield a scale of reading adequacy, one that privileges those student [or academic] readers who have gathered the most information about the text. The rest are forced to drown in a sea of authoritatively positioned voices. (31)

Pradl exposes the irony at the heart of some contextualist approaches to literary study, whereby 'liberating lectures [or conference papers]' permeated by neo-Marxist historicism become teaching manoeuvres that are 'seldom innocent or neutral' (86). What he means by this is that while claiming to be radical and emancipatory, or at least politically committed to questioning the status quo, the *teaching* of literature may tend to reinforce traditional authoritative methods which are focused on the transmission of knowledge as a fixed body of information *about* the text, which will then be mirrored by the students in their assignments.

Indeed, I have struggled with this problem of authority in my own teaching, particularly of theory, and at the time Pradl offered me personal advice to re-orient the teaching so that theory was felt to be needed by students after they had actually had a literary experience, rather

⁸³ Mark Dressman and Joan Parker Webster, 'Retracing Rosenblatt: "A Textual Archaeology"', *Research in the Teaching of English*, 36 (2001): 110-45, p. 129.

⁸⁴ This is the premise of Peter Barry's, *Literature in Contexts*.

than given to them as a packaged entity to apply to so-called ‘literary texts’ they were never in fact asked to experience as ‘literary’. The famous Brazilian philosopher of education, Paulo Freire, spoke of this kind of authority matrix as the ‘banking concept’ of education, whereby knowledge is ‘deposited’ by the powerful (those sanctioned to teach) in students’ minds.⁸⁵ Of course, not all teaching inflected by cultural criticism would follow this model; critical literacy, for example, is a subtler way of engaging students with critical theory and historical themes.⁸⁶ But Pradl’s (and my own) experience of the pedagogies of traditional liberal arts departments led him to claim that the teaching of politically engaged literary studies is ‘seldom innocent or neutral’.

It is important to stress that the focus here is on the institutional practice of literary studies rather than new developments in scholarship. Eric Hayot, for instance, has argued that any failure of contextualist approaches is not down to the ‘heady conceptual arena’, but rather to the ‘*institutionalization* of the period as the fundamental mode of literary study at every level of the profession’.⁸⁷ Felski reiterates that ‘everything conspires to reinforce the idea that the original historical meaning of a text is its salient meaning and to devalue the credentials of scholars who wander across several periods rather than settling down in one’.⁸⁸ Concerned with a text’s sociability, Felski criticises forms of contextualism for being ‘the functional equivalent of cultural relativism, quarantining difference, denying relatedness, and suspending – or less kindly, evading – the question of why past texts still matter and how they speak to us now’.⁸⁹ Yet Felski fails to make the crucial link between textual sociability and the actual experience

⁸⁵ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos (London: Penguin, 1996), p. 53. The so-called ‘marketization of higher education’ in the past twenty years has only inflamed the potency of Freire’s metaphor.

⁸⁶ See Misson and Morgan, *Critical Literacy and the Aesthetic*.

⁸⁷ Eric Hayot, ‘Against Periodization; or, On Institutional Time’, *New Literary History*, 42 (2011): 739-56, p. 740, original emphasis.

⁸⁸ Felski, “‘Context Stinks!’”, p. 581.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 577.

of reading, particularly in the context of a reader's reservoir of past literary and linguistic experiences. Felski and Hayot lend support to Pradl's intuition that in their institutional manifestations, contextual approaches *run the risk* of presenting themselves as all-important and sometimes too inflexible regarding the varieties of the personal experience of literature, which may, as H.D. reminds us, be 'uncanonically seated' and thus at variance with acceptable contextual frameworks.⁹⁰

Moreover, Pradl senses the importance of the individual in Rosenblatt's work, and this leads him to be honest about the difficulties and yet the necessity of creating democracy. He claims that most people are not 'completely predisposed to democracy; someone is always playing their music too loudly and I go mad' (6). Only by remembering that democracy is always in process (and thus never fully attained) can this unnaturalness be dealt with. Attuned to Rosenblatt's existentialism, Pradl affirms that individuals are forever in a state of becoming, and, in literary studies, 'literary response is not a search for final meaning' (9). Rather, those involved (learners and educators) need to 'prepare for the unexpected' when minds 'collide' with texts in 'open conversation' (10). The implication here is that not only will students recognise the importance of Felski's question of why past texts matter to us now, but that they will engage with this question in a personalistic way because the transactional literary experience prioritises the individual and his manifold experiences. Pradl helps to move the goalposts away from recognising textual sociability per se, towards valuing personalist textual sociability, with the individual learner brought into democratic conversation with others. Such conversations among students should involve 'the reading experiences *they* have initiated for themselves' (134, original emphasis).

⁹⁰ I do not really include new historicism within this broader notion of 'contextualism'. Consistent with Peter Barry's manoeuvre in *Literature in Contexts*, 'contextualism' denotes a crude form of bolting texts to various historical moments. John Schad, for instance, has claimed that new historicism sometimes engaged in connecting 'un-like moments' in history, and thus is less tied to facticity: John Schad and David Jonathan Y. Bayot, *John Schad in Conversation* (Manila: De La Salle University Publishing House, 2015), p. 12.

Also sensing some incongruity between particular literary approaches and how they are institutionalised in social discussion, the literary theorist Jane Tompkins (who read Rosenblatt) drew upon a table of distinctions made by Ludwig Fischer in order to illustrate another way of conceiving and practising reading as a social act.⁹¹

Information	Conversation
intention	attention
on-line facts	on-the-line presences
aggressive	receptive
bits	context
addictive, as reality substitute	satisfying
persuasion	common exploration
finished, structured, 'brilliant'	open, uncertain
speed	rhythm
perfect form	irregular deviation

Tompkins reproduces this table in her article in order to highlight the consequences of a particular way of thinking about literary study. Although she does not connect these two paradigms to contextualisms, I think they accurately express the distinctions Pradl and Felski are making in their own ways. As with Rosenblatt's aesthetic-efferent continuum, Fischer's distinctions should also be viewed as two extremes, with mixed approaches predominating. Yet the stark contrasts help to theorise the practice of communicating literary research.

The information paradigm, which seems descriptive of some forms of contextualism singled out for criticism by Felski and Pradl, may in fact foster attitudes and habits which are

⁹¹ Jane Tompkins, 'Scenes from a Conference: Discovering the True Nature of Liberal Conversation', *Change*, 23 (1991): 6-8, p.7. Tompkins references Rosenblatt in her edited volume, *Reader Response Criticism: From Formalism to Post-Structuralism* (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 1980), p. xxvi.

destructive to true learning and which seem anti-personalist. The conversation paradigm, on the other hand, seems more sensitive to the ways in which individuals create their own textual sociability in their reading, and privilege a mode of social discussion which allows for the necessary personalism inherent in such stances. To echo Rosenblatt's transactional mode of literary criticism, the conversation paradigm would seem to invite some insight into the reading experience itself. And when H.D.'s practice is brought into the picture, we find that her various metaphors for literary experience and the associational consciousness at its heart – the pleated folds of time, the bee-hive centre for healing and regeneration, the spiral shell of exploration, and the cathedral of non-violent association – align with the essential spirit of the conversational paradigm. H.D.'s approach is tentative, exploratory, and allows for moments of 'irregular deviation'. Her modernist and existentialist impulse means that an uncertain end of something is to be valued rather than rejected in favour of a 'finished', 'structured', or 'brilliant' conclusion.

If Pradl's work has any shortcomings, then these lie in his tendency to accept Rosenblatt's work in an uncritical fashion, as being finished and complete. However, his value lies in his ability to sense the core of Rosenblatt's project, which brings the attention to her politics and her care for the individual. By bringing her theory into a present pedagogical context with reference to new forms of contextualisms, Pradl crystallises the link between ways of knowing literature and the institutional forms in which this knowing can happen, with direct consequences for actual human relations. Seen in a broader context of criticism by Felski, Hayot, and Tompkins, Pradl can be placed in a particular moment of literary theory which seeks to put the brakes on the acceleration of contextualist approaches without time for necessary critique. While not wishing to dispense with contextualisms altogether, these thinkers call for a revised focus for contextualism, away from external, authoritative sources,

towards a more internalised and personalistic attitude which would simultaneously revisit pedagogy.

Conclusion

This chapter has sought to develop a theory of personalist textual sociability as an outcome of Rosenblatt's and H.D.'s overarching commitment to the individual and his experience. By means of an analysis of Rosenblatt's theory of aesthetic reading and her emphasis on the way a reader utilises his reservoir of past literary and non-literary experiences to construct meaning as an interpretant between signs and their referents, I have analysed the personalistic core of her vision of aesthetic reading, which intertwines literature and life as being a progressive pedagogical position attuned to thinking about wisdom. Turning to H.D.'s *Sword*, I further developed the personalistic nature of textual sociability by discussing some central metaphors in her work which I contend are in fact metaphors of reading that serve to extend and further personalise Rosenblatt's more theoretical discourse. Most importantly, the personalistic nature of *Sword* creates a notion of existential time which allows people to think differently about experiences, whether aesthetic or non-aesthetic.

In *The Mystery*, H.D. creates a story of two individuals in quest, who come together in a temple edifice and veer round by their encounter. This veering round relates both to a manner of consciousness and to an attitude towards human relations more broadly. I have argued that H.D. continues her extended metaphor of the temple as *tempora*, thus creating a link between ways of thinking about literature and ways of envisaging human unity more generally, which will be the central focus of the following chapter. Moreover, by looking at the work of Rosenblatt's colleague, Gordon Pradl, I have explicitly connected my discourse of personalist textual sociability to thinking about contexts in literary study and the institutionalisation of these approaches. Drawing on the work of more contemporary thinkers of contextualisms –

Felski, Hayot, and Tompkins – I have also showed how the potentially anti-personalistic nature of some forms of contextualisms impact the way people relate to each other in the institutional practice of literary studies. Yet rather than dispensing with context altogether, I have shown how personalist textual sociability represents a different vision of context – one which is centred in a person’s existential time and which emerges during the various stages of the transactional literary experience and its follow-up activities.

While this chapter has introduced the notion of history and contexts and applied them specifically to the dynamics of the literary experience, in the next chapter I look more specifically at the way Rosenblatt and H.D. conceive of imagination, and how such a conception impacts upon their vision of human relations. Chapter 3 is more concerned than this chapter about the individual’s relationship to other people, both in the literary experience and beyond it. In particular, I focus on my thinkers’ various ideas of an individual who seeks to articulate new possibilities for what it means to live a good life in community with others. By focusing on the role of the literary experience and the value of engaging in personalist textual sociability, new conclusions can be reached about perennial (and new) problems, and thus move us ever closer to wisdom, which is the topic of Chapter 4.

3. Literary Imagination and the Quest for Personal Connection

This chapter explores the ways in which personalist textual sociability, and the transactional literary experience more generally, entails a particular conception of literary imagination and by extension, the capacity for personal connection with others in further spheres of life. In the previous chapter I drew attention to the ways personalist thought has sometimes sought to make a connection between a specific way of thinking and broader human relations. Ivan Kireevsky, who may be said to be an influence on Berdyaev's Russian form of personalism, developed his concept of 'integral knowledge' as a pathway to *sobornost*, which is an untranslatable Russian term for unity among people.¹ As Robert Bird and Boris Jakim acknowledge, since the 1840s Russian philosophy more broadly has often been concerned with seeking integral knowledge, or 'knowledge as an organic, all-embracing unity that includes sensuous, intellectual, and mystical intuition', in addition to advocating the nourishment of integral personality (*tsel'naya lichnost*), 'which is at once mystical, rational, and sensuous'.² Importantly, the growth of integral knowledge and integral personality is centred on a vision of transformation within a community of other people – *sobornost*. It is this connection between integral knowledge, of which personalist textual sociability is an important part, and personal transformation within a broader human community, that is the subject of this chapter.

Although Rosenblatt and H.D. explore this connection between knowledge and society through different discourses, especially romanticism, modernism, and pluralism, it is ultimately their amenability to personalism which is able to connect their interest in imagination and human relations to integrative ways of knowing. Rosenblatt's longstanding faith in the capacity of literary imagination to provide a means of identification between readers and characters at

¹ See Aleksei Khomiakov and Ivan Kireevsky, *On Spiritual Unity: A Slavophile Reader*, trans. and ed. by Boris Jakim and Robert Bird (Hudson, NY: Lindisfarne Books, 1998).

² *Ibid.*, p. 368.

the same time as broadening readers' horizons by depicting unfamiliar experiences, derives from a distinctly romantic inheritance. Although she does not dwell extensively on Coleridge, it is clear that Rosenblatt is continuing the persistent conversation among literary thinkers about the importance of imagination and creative ways of envisaging oneself and one's relation to others.³ The emphasis is on thinking in more holistic, integrative ways, which combine reason and emotion. H.D., on the other hand, approaches the subject of imagination via a modernist recapitulation of romantic sentiments concerning the possibility of personal connection in imagination – the ability to reach out to other personalities (characters) in the literary experience.

The first half of the chapter explores the various ways Rosenblatt and H.D. in turn approach the topic of literary imagination. Although they do not use the term 'literary imagination' as such, I have chosen to use literary imagination as an umbrella concept for the more diffuse ways in which my thinkers broach the topic. 'Literary' denotes a relation to the notion of aesthetic experience explored in the previous chapter, and the prevalence of personalist textual sociability within such an experience. What I am concerned to address is the possibilities of literary imagination during the transactional literary experience and the process of delineating a text's sociability.

The second half of the chapter broadens out the discussion on imagination to encompass the quest for personal connection within a community of others. For Rosenblatt, this search for connection is centred in a vision of cultural pluralism, wherein individuals come together to create a society in which differences can thrive. Her emphasis is on diversity within unity, with more weight given to what people share rather than what separates them. H.D., on the other hand, offers a more obviously personalistic exploration of human connection by appearing to

³ For an up-to-date exploration of imagination and its Romantic inheritance refracted through a neuroscientific angle, see Iain McGilchrist, *The Master and His Emissary: The Divided Brain and the Making of the Western World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010).

foreground physical attachment among characters in her work. H.D.'s vision reminds us that at some point the quest for connection with others needs to be more than an abstract idea – a concept of pluralism, for example – and yet with reference to literary imagination, H.D.'s vision of attachment is also realistic. Literary imagination cannot be asked to do work for us which it cannot perform. Nevertheless, intimacy within personalist textual sociability is externalised in a very personal form of connectivity among individual persons, forming the nucleus of community.

Finally, both thinkers define a role for the individual who sets about communicating new visions of personal connection. For Rosenblatt, Walt Whitman's concept of the *literatus* provides her with a model of a writer who seeks to create new patterns of social behaviour. For H.D., the more ancient vocation of the scribe becomes a potent trope for the writer who seeks to console and reconstruct after the devastation of war. While Rosenblatt's *literatus* is more obviously institutional – somebody who can work within the academy – H.D.'s scribe tests the limits of existing ideas about what a professional thinker may do and achieve.

Literary Imagination

Rosenblatt and Imaginative Participation in the Literary Experience

Rosenblatt's engagement with literary imagination, or imaginative participation in the literary experience, is threefold. Firstly, she extols the possibility and necessity of readers forming some form of emotional identification with personalities in literary texts. Yet she also recognises that the literary experience can broaden horizons by defamiliarising what a reader already knows or assumes about life. Finally, Rosenblatt emphasises the role of aesthetic distance in enabling students to layer their own experiences within those of fictional ones, thereby avoiding any embarrassment from having to talk explicitly about oneself, either in classroom discussion or in a piece of writing.

Throughout *Literature as Exploration* Rosenblatt speaks passionately of encouraging students to identify with aspects of literature as a route to self-knowledge – to locate the self in others. Although Rosenblatt emphasised a reader's capacity to identify with others in literature in her 1938 *Literature as Exploration*, her 1984 edition registers the desire in the 1960s to move away from 'the over-intellectualized, pseudo-scientific and analytic educational emphases', toward 'the sensuous and emotional aspects of literary experience' reflected at the time in calls for curricular 'relevance'.⁴ She is intuitively feeling her way to Kireevsky's position, desiring a more person-centred, holistic manner of learning. Rosenblatt states, perhaps unoriginally, that the ability to 'identify with the experiences of others is a most precious human attribute' and claims that as readers we 'tend to "feel ourselves into," to empathize with', aspects of literature resonating in us (37). This is in line with a phrase of one of Rosenblatt's students, that 'often in books one comes across people like oneself or people with problems similar to one's own' (200). Seeing one's own life experiences afresh through imaginative participation in fictional worlds, one might be led to 'think and feel more clearly about them', usually by discussing these with others in an indirect manner (200). That Rosenblatt re-capitulated a well-known faith in literature's potential to foster empathy is evidence that she found herself in an academic climate in which this message needed to be repeated; it is the reiteration, and how Rosenblatt wove this sentiment into her theory, which is important.

These life experiences which literature might help us to think more clearly about may relate to the externals of someone's life, such as a particular family experience. But Rosenblatt also stresses that a reader's imaginative identification may be with a morphology of feeling, with 'the structure of emotional relationships' a given situation may 'imply': 'the power of the work may reside in its underlying emotional structure, its configuration of human drives' (41).

⁴ Louise M. Rosenblatt, *Literature as Exploration*, 4th ed. (New York: MLA, 1983), p. ix. Further references to this text are given in parentheses in the main body.

For example, a young person experiencing difficulties negotiating parental authority may ‘respond to a lot of things that might not be directly about parents and children, but that have a basic authority [*sic*]... versus acceptance or rejection of authority as the basic emotional pattern’.⁵

Rosenblatt’s commitment to encouraging learners to identify with characters and their experiences in literature is motivated by her belief that this can lead to a growth in self-understanding, for ‘much that in life itself might seem disorganized and meaningless takes on order and significance when it comes under the organizing and vitalizing influence of the artist’ (42). The implication here is that by permitting people to explore literature with potential bridges to their past and present life experiences, individuals may discover that a particular work chimes with something in their lives, and part of the activity that follows the literary experience would seek to tease out in a more precise way the nature of such chiming or identification – the way in which this particular artist has, through their text, enabled a reader to evoke a work of art that speaks especially to aspects of that individual’s existential situation. There is therefore a correlation between the sociability of human experiences (a reader’s and a literary work’s) and the sociability of texts themselves – the way in which texts become existentially linked in a reader’s mind. It is in this sense that I refer to human sociability being an externalisation of personalist textual sociability.

In *Literature as Exploration* Rosenblatt is fairly intuitive about the way literature may engage a reader’s imagination. She is drawing upon her sympathy with romantic ideas about the potential potency of art to change people’s lives. As she recalled in 2001 about a conversation with her father around 1920: ‘I said Shelley points out that the poets are the legislators of mankind [...] the poet develops our imagination and enables us to put ourselves

⁵ Gordon M. Pradl, ‘A Conversation with Louise M. Rosenblatt’, 1988, p. 23. Private papers. New York.

into the place of others'.⁶ In his 'A Defence of Poetry' (1821), Shelley claims that poets 'are the institutors of laws and the founders of civil society, and the inventors of the arts of life, and the teachers who draw into a certain propinquity with the beautiful and the true that partial apprehension of the agencies of the invisible world which is called religion'.⁷ It is clear that Rosenblatt filtered Shelley's quasi-religious vision of poetry and poets through her own philosophy, which asserted a secular democracy capable of embracing everyone; she focused on literature's capacity to institute, found, and invent. Yet it is possible to sense Shelley behind Rosenblatt's talk of the 'vitalizing influence of the artist', for Shelley also refers to the way poetry 'awakens and enlarges the mind itself by rendering it the receptacle of a thousand unapprehended combinations of thought'.⁸ There is an emphasis here on what Rosenblatt refers to as 'development' – the way authors have the potential to educate readers. That Rosenblatt omits the 'unacknowledged' which Shelley places before 'legislators' only seems to underscore her optimism about the role of literature in society; on this model, it has definite educative potential.⁹ Rosenblatt came at romanticism from a further century of literary activity, in particular by studying the 'art-for-art's sake' movement in Victorian England and the assertion of the special function of the artist; she was attuned to the ways in which readers responded to literary works in so far as their attitudes were moulded, challenged, and extended by what they read.

Nevertheless, for Rosenblatt the romantic conception of poetry (for Rosenblatt always a metonym for literature more broadly) as inviting an experience was central to her understanding of imagination; it synchronised with her transactional approach. 'Only if the reader turns his attention inward to his experience of "the journey itself," will a poem happen',

⁶ Garn Press, 'Great Women Scholars Part Three: Louise Rosenblatt' (August 5, 2015), <http://garnpress.com/2015/great-women-scholars-part-three-louise-rosenblatt/> (accessed online, August 3, 2016).

⁷ Percy Bysshe Shelley, *The Selected Poems and Prose of Shelley* (Ware: Wordsworth, 2002), p. 637.

⁸ Ibid., p. 642.

⁹ Ibid., p. 660.

she wrote.¹⁰ Quoting Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria* (1817), Rosenblatt thereby affirms the link she sees between literary experience and imagination. By turning to 'the journey itself' not only will a literary work of art be evoked, but the imagination will be engaged, with potentially transformative potential.

Elizabeth A. Flynn has claimed Rosenblatt as someone in the second half of the twentieth century who participated in an 'ethical turn in literary theory'.¹¹ What I believe she meant by this was that Rosenblatt was focused on the relationship between readers and texts in a way that foregrounded the transformative potential of such encounters – both in the personal sense (revising personal attitudes and beliefs) and also in the social (encouraging empathy towards others). However, it is also possible to position Rosenblatt as a forerunner of more cognitive investigations into the ways in which readers engage in literary imagination. Rosenblatt was aware of the cognitive turn in psychology and linguistics from the 1950s, but nevertheless transcended its focus by positioning her theory of reading within a prescriptive vision of human flourishing. She was not only interested in the 'how' of reading, but also in the 'why'.

Since the 1990s Text World Theory – the brainchild of Paul Werth – has sought to provide descriptive, methodological analyses in the discipline of linguistics of the ways in which individuals form and handle mental representations of language.¹² Text World Theory is a contemporary product of the broader cognitive turn in the second half of the twentieth century. According to Joanna Gavins, Text World Theory is an experiential approach to language, recognising the various contexts in which language is used and the ways in which a

¹⁰ Louise M. Rosenblatt, *The Reader, the Text, the Poem: The Transactional Theory of the Literary Work* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1994), p. 28.

¹¹ Elizabeth A. Flynn, 'Louise Rosenblatt and the Ethical Turn in Literary Theory', *College English*, 70 (2007): 52-69.

¹² Paul Werth, *Text Worlds: Representing Conceptual Space in Discourse* (London: Longman, 1999).

reader's 'experiential background' intersects with the fictional world in the reading act.¹³ She talks of the way in which 'text worlds' – the various mental representations of our experience of language in a given reading act – can have an immersive effect on the individual: how 'the emotional and physical responses of our text world experiences can induce, may reduce us to tears, provoke laughter, even start revolutions'.¹⁴

Although Rosenblatt was aware of the cognitive turn and was interested in some of its concepts (see Chapter 2), she remained wedded to the transactional, Peircean and Deweyan conception of language cognition and knowledge because of its ethical implications. As Gordon Pradl has noted, whether it is reader-response or cognitive linguistics, reference to models of reading and language cognition may have a tendency to description, whereas Rosenblatt's transactional model is prescriptive:

not that that's bad, it's just that it sends you off on a different investigative agenda [...] While, of course, the [transactional] model has construct validity – it relates to how people seem to behave in the world – more important [*sic*] it attempts to enact a value system even as it pretends to 'scientifically' capture how people really read.¹⁵

The different 'investigative agenda' relates to the nature of the relationship among individuals and between readers and fictional worlds, and those who impact this dyad – academics, teachers, other students, friends and family.¹⁶ For Rosenblatt (and for Pradl), literary

¹³ Joanna Gavins, *Text World Theory: An Introduction* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), p. 8; Sven Strasen and Julia Vaeßen, 'T-REX: Triggers of reader emotion and experientiality', paper delivered at the University of Nottingham, June 2016.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 10. See also Sara Whiteley, 'Text World Theory, real readers and emotional responses to *The Remains of the Day*', *Language and Literature*, 20 (2011): 23-42, pp. 24-25. 'Immersion' is currently being theorised by Peter Stockwell: Peter Stockwell, 'Immersion', paper delivered at the University of Nottingham, June 2016.

¹⁵ Gordon Pradl, 'Rosenblatt File', June 30 – July 5 1988. Private papers. New York.

¹⁶ From within the field of cognitive linguistics, the work of Marcello Giovanelli and Jessica Mason in particular seeks to explore the contextual, institutional factors affecting how learners engage in fictional worlds. See their blog for up-to-date summaries of their insights: <http://studyingfiction.wordpress.com>.

imagination is ethical because it is transactional: it requires a particular stance toward the other, be it other people or one's subject material.

Indeed, I would argue that Rosenblatt's understanding and treatment of literary imagination is resolutely personalistic. While Rosenblatt invokes romanticism as a precursor to her transactional emphasis on literary experience, she also emphasises 'the journey itself' for its broader implications. By focusing on the experience of evoking a literary work from a text, and by encouraging personalist textual sociability in a literary experience, Rosenblatt's theory offers scope for foregrounding specific encounters that can become objects of rational thought: in other words, she is interested in the connections readers make between personal experiences, fictional or non-fictional as the basis for re-evaluating worldviews and attitudes towards actual people in the 'real world'.

As such, Rosenblatt approximates Berdyaev's reluctance to identify with romanticism wholeheartedly: 'Romantics are, as a rule, preoccupied with the experiences and sensations which accompany that search rather than with the attainment of truth or meaning'.¹⁷ A personalist, rather than a purely romantic perspective, would therefore position literary imagination – the 'journey itself' – as a journey with a destination, which may indeed be provisional and tentative, but which nevertheless has a telos in mind: namely, the free and full growth of individual persons, which, of course, is still in line with the romanticism of somebody like Coleridge (see Chapter 1).

Rosenblatt's interest is therefore profoundly pedagogical: literary imagination matters to her for its ability to educate. Indeed, she also turns her attention to the capacity of literature to defamiliarise readers' existing ideas about life and about other people because this is crucial to the educational project.¹⁸ John Rouse, who was a doctoral student of Rosenblatt's in the

¹⁷ Nicolas Berdyaev, *Dream and Reality: An Essay in Autobiography*, trans. Katharine Lampert (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1950), p. 107.

¹⁸ See Viktor Shklovsky, *Theory of Prose*, trans. Benjamin Sher (London: Dalkey Archive Press, 2009), pp. 1-14.

1960s, explained in his 1983 essay for *College English*, 'An Erotics of Teaching', how Rosenblatt parted company with subjectivist reader-response theorists such as Norman Holland and David Bleich who seemed to privilege the private individual.¹⁹ Using H.D.'s experience with Freud as his starting point, Rouse shows how Holland (an H.D. critic) in fact deviates in his own work from the Freud-H.D. analyst / analysand relationship because he refuses to apprehend the importance of a transactional encounter between self and other; instead, for Holland (via Rouse), the self is encouraged to limit her horizon with an 'identity theme' she has located in the literary work, leading to an 'esthetic of self-love'.²⁰ According to Rouse, Holland especially limits the literary experience by trapping the self in her own past, whereas for Rosenblatt, the learner is expected to have his eyes set upon the present transaction and future possibilities. A reader's location of his own experience in a literary work is a valuable and necessary stage in the learning process; but it does not need to end there. Indeed, for Rosenblatt and Rouse, the literary experience can supplement an individual's experience, helping any 'identity theme' to be tempered, defamiliarised, and seen in new light through real engagement with other people's experiences, fictional or real. In Rouse's eyes, H.D.'s transactions with Freud, in which she discussed her dream experiences, enabled her to move on into the future and to attain a revised sense of values: for example, walking through the deserted streets of Vienna to work with Freud out of a sense of commitment in the face of fear (see Chapter 4 for more on H.D. and Freud).²¹

So, on one level, additional experience is for Rosenblatt a default consequence of the theory of the literary transaction, which claims that the interface between reader and text results in a new experience, a Peircean intermingling of sign, referent, and interpretant. But on the more important level, such additional experiences may lead to growth in empathetic attitudes

¹⁹ John Rouse, 'An Erotics of Teaching', *College English*, 45 (1983): 535-48.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 537.

²¹ Ibid., p. 535.

– what Suzanne Keen in her study, *Empathy and the Novel* (2007) – refers to as the ‘affective transaction across boundaries of time, culture, and location’.²² According to Rosenblatt, ‘books are a means of getting outside the limited cultural group into which the individual is born. They are, in a sense, elements of societies distant in time and space made personally available to the reader’ (192).²³ Such discourse reminds us of H.D.’s concern for the pleated folds of time which are laid flat on the table, thus attaching to the ‘affective transaction across boundaries of time, culture, and location’ an ethical emphasis on levelling, on seeing the other on common ground. Positioning personalist textual sociability within a discourse of existential time frees the reader to engage in literary imagination and to open himself to its possible benefits in the form of empathy and the amplification of his insight into the human condition. We enter the literary experience like Saint-Germain in the Cathedral, waiting and expectant for the coming – the incarnation – of the Visitor.

Evidently, not all books depict life in a remote place or time, so rather than a dualism of ‘here’ and ‘there’ and even one of ‘I’ and ‘them’, Rosenblatt’s general thrust is toward a continuum, entirely focused on the specific transaction between actual readers and actual texts. In her 1940 essay, ‘Moderns Among Masterpieces’, she declares the benefit of studying the ‘classics’ to be in their ability to offer ‘new insights’ applicable to a reader’s ‘contemporary’ society.²⁴ A reader should ideally be ‘alive in the truest sense, not cut off from the world about them, but aware of the conflicting currents of thought and feeling, the unsolved problems, the

²² Suzanne Keen, *Empathy and the Novel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. xxv.

²³ For a contemporary exploration of third-person to first-person modes of reader-character empathy, see Marco Caracciolo, ‘Beyond Other Minds: Fictional Characters, Mental Stimulation, and “Unnatural” Experiences’, *Journal of Narrative Theory*, 44 (2014): 29-53. Carolina Fernandez-Quintanilla is also working on stages of reader empathy, creating a model of a reader’s perspective adoption, attribution of mental / emotional experience to the character, finally to a reader’s enactment or imaginative experience of a character’s emotions. Carolina Fernandez-Quintanilla, ‘Experiencing fictional worlds through empathy with characters’, paper delivered at the University of Nottingham, June 2016.

²⁴ Louise M. Rosenblatt, ‘Moderns Among Masterpieces’, *The English Leaflet*, 39 (1940): 98-110, reprinted in Rosenblatt, *Making Meaning*, pp. 106-114, p. 108.

new visions struggling to be born'.²⁵ Rosenblatt seems to advocate a dialogic relationship between self and other – not an utter and radical difference between reader and fictional world, or even between 'classic' and 'contemporary' – but rather a porous borderland with scope for identification as well as amplification. Rosenblatt deftly avoids polemic about the canon by re-framing the debate from the perspective of actual readers: who are they? What will help them become the kind of readers she has in mind – sensitive, critical, and evaluative?

As I explained in Chapter 2, to have a literary experience in the first place, there needs to be some kind of context in the reader's 'literary-experiential reservoir' with which to make meaning with text; that 'we can communicate', wrote Rosenblatt, is 'because of a common core of experience, even though there may be infinite personal variations' (28). This in itself precludes an extreme othering; if a reader cannot 'make anything' of a text, like the Indian students Rosenblatt read about at a reservation school who were lost when given a Restoration comedy to read, then this is not a fault of the students – a moral failure to register the other (57). Rather, it is a fault of the educational establishment which has misunderstood the nature of the reading process and the literary experience. The 'dead hand of the past' is only such, in Rosenblatt's eyes, if a 'classic' is deemed to be dead by criteria irrelevant to a particular reader or set of readers.²⁶

Instead, Rosenblatt envisages 'the warm clasp of human companionship. Let us lead [our students]', she wrote,

to the literature of the past *and* of the present, as to the worlds of fellow men. From each we shall seek a work of art that will illuminate the question about 'man's relation to the world he lives in, man's relation

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 114.

with the men among whom he lives, and, finally, man's relation to himself'.²⁷

Invoking Somerset Maugham's Philip Carey, literature is here framed as a means of offering self-knowledge and knowledge of others, as a way of working out a mode of living in the present that can accommodate the differences of others. The practical goal renders the transactional focus sympathetic, because it does not entail an extreme othering or difference, but a project of trying to share and understand.

Furthermore, when Rosenblatt talks of the ways in which students identify their own experiences in literature, she claims that by maintaining aesthetic distance, they will be able to explore (in class or in writing) the relationship between self and other in a secure way, without the risk of direct self-exposure.²⁸ 'We know', she wrote, 'that the literary work provides "aesthetic distance" so that by participating in characters' or personas' emotions we may handle our own emotions without excessive pain or disturbance'.²⁹ In her discussion of college girls talking about Ibsen's Nora in *A Doll's House*, for instance, Rosenblatt suggested that 'some sort of identification with Nora had occurred. Yet the students felt free to show their feeling because ostensibly they were talking about Nora, not themselves' (237). By concentrating on the 'situation in the book' rather than on an individual's own explicit life experiences, it 'merely makes it easier for the reader to bring his own inner problems into the open, and to face them or seek the help of others without the embarrassment of explicit self-revelation. Thus, he often reveals what he cannot or will not say about himself' (205). The 'wise teacher' will not pretend to be a psychiatrist (à la Holland), but will in fact join in the process of exploration – 'to be a complete human being in his relations with his students – bringing to bear in his work with them all of the sensitivities that he would bring to bear in his relations with people outside the

²⁷ Ibid, original emphasis.

²⁸ Louise M. Rosenblatt, 'Pattern and Process – A Polemic', *The English Journal*, 58 (1969): 1005-1012, p. 1007.

²⁹ Ibid.

classroom' (208). I think this is probably easier to say than to do, although given Rosenblatt's methodology, she would have tried to be like this herself in her own classes.³⁰

What would make it easier, perhaps, to think through how we might frame aesthetic distance and put it into action in our writing and teaching, is some additional vocabulary, especially metaphors, which might clarify Rosenblatt's use of aesthetic distance. Turning to H.D.'s appropriation of the palimpsest as a mode of consciousness will assist in this. Dwelling on aesthetic distance is important because it represents the adhesive bond between self and other in both Rosenblatt's and H.D.'s work although, as I will show, H.D. adds some additional insights which contribute to a more rounded overall picture of the value of literary imagination. The quest for personal connection in the literary experience can frustrate as well as reward.

H.D.'s Palimpsestuous Consciousness

H.D. launched her career as a poet in the 1910s by invoking and evoking classical landscapes which form the backdrop for personal experience. Or rather, the landscapes of *Sea Garden* (1916) were in fact imagist presentations of her personal experience. In 'Garden', for example, the speaker calls to the wind to 'rend open the heat, / cut apart the heat, / rend it to tatters'.³¹ Recalling the approach of imagism which I explored in the previous chapter, the speaker is presenting rather than representing his / her experience. After this cry, the speaker explains that

Fruit cannot drop
through this thick air –
fruit cannot fall into heat
that presses up and blunts
the points of pears

³⁰ Rouse, 'An Erotics of Teaching', pp. 543-48.

³¹ H.D., *Collected Poems 1911-1944*, ed. Louis L. Martz (New York: New Directions, 1983), p. 25. Immediate further references to this poem are also from this page.

and rounds the grapes.

Although a logical explanation of why the speaker wishes the wind to ‘rend open the heat’, the explanation is itself marked by shifts in mood that indicate that this explanation is also a continuation of the speaker’s emotional experience. The dactylic rising and sudden falling at the end of the first three lines contrast with the quicker beat of iambs in the second half: repetition of consonants (‘presses’, ‘blunts’, ‘points’, ‘pears’, ‘rounds’, ‘grapes’) underscores the movement into a more consistent rhythm, as if the speaker is exasperated by the fact that ‘fruit cannot drop’. Translated back into the experience of a person, one could say that the speaker is suffering a creative block, where creativity is stifled by the ‘heat’ that ‘presses’ and ‘blunts’.³² Although depicted in the universal economy of imagism, genderless and abstracted into the landscape of timeless nature, the image is in fact deeply personal as well, revealing the immediacy of human experience. As Rosenblatt argued in *Literature as Exploration*, ‘even the literary work that seems most remote, an imagist poem or a fantasy, reveals new notes in the gamut of human experience’.³³

Although her body of work expanded over the decades to include prose set in the contemporary world, H.D. returned repeatedly to historical periods and timeless environments in which to tell her own story, and through which she gained some aesthetic distance between herself and her experiences. Her 1926 novel, *Palimpsest*, is a landmark in this development because of its explicitness in engaging aesthetic distance. *Palimpsest* is a volume or ‘triptych’ of three connected stories which H.D. believed tell the same story, even though they are narratives set in different times and locations.³⁴ As Sarah Dillon has said in her work, *The*

³² Janice Robinson argues that H.D.’s imagist poems often reveal her struggles with Ezra Pound’s dominance over her early attempts at writing poetry. See *H.D.: The Life and Work of an American Poet* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1982).

³³ Louise M. Rosenblatt, *Literature as Exploration*, 5th ed. (New York: MLA, 1995), p. 6.

³⁴ See H.D., ‘H.D. by Delia Alton’, *The Iowa Review*, 16 (1986): 180-221. See also Deborah Kelly Kloepper, ‘Fishing the Murex up: Sense and Resonance in H.D.’s *Palimpsest*’, *Contemporary Literature*, 27 (1986): 553-73, p. 556.

Palimpsest (2007), a palimpsest asks readers to work out how its stories, more or less visible, ‘inhabit and encrypt each other’.³⁵ In fact, in her chapter on H.D., Dillon prefers to talk of H.D.’s affinity with the ‘palimpsestuous’ rather than the palimpsest per se. The palimpsestuous intimates at an ‘incestuous’ relationship between stories, and yet, at one remove from ‘incestuous’, palimpsestuous implies a protective distance between selves located in a text.³⁶ Importantly, the palimpsest and palimpsestuous are not concerned with textual sources; they are not ‘a metaphor of origin, influence, or filtration’.³⁷ The context for palimpsestuous texts is instead one embedded in existential time. In constructing her own palimpsests, H.D. was moving into a palimpsestuous consciousness that could create her own context for a text: one based on emotional reverberations among a palimpsest’s stories. Her palimpsests are forms of personalist textual sociability.

While H.D.’s interest in the palimpsest is closely related to her translation work (from Greek to English), translation is not the focus of my attention.³⁸ Instead, I am interested in the way palimpsestuous consciousness opens a space for forming personal connections or attachments. Because of its resolutely personal nature, the literary experience creates a space – a temple (to echo Chapter 2) – in which readers may encounter the personalities of others, often in fiction, but also in poetry and other genres as well. By focusing on a little known early story by H.D. – ‘The Greek Boy’ (c. 1911) – against a backdrop of H.D.’s final epic poem *Helen in Egypt* (1961), I claim that attachment lies at the heart of H.D.’s palimpsestuous consciousness as a mode of learning. Layering her own story beneath those of other characters’, and depicting characters who do something similar, is not a manipulative stance – using others’ stories for one’s own purposes – to uncover an ‘identity theme’, to echo Holland. Instead, I see the

³⁵ Sarah Dillon, *The Palimpsest: Literature, Criticism, Theory* (London: Continuum, 2007), p. 108.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 85.

³⁸ See Eileen Gregory, *H.D. and Hellenism: Classic Lines* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997) for more on H.D. and translation.

palimpsestuous as a form of attachment and intimacy, of dwelling in the story and life of another in order to touch and be touched by them. In this sense, the palimpsestuous extends Rosenblatt's vision of literary imagination because it is more overtly concerned with the nature of personal connection – the way in which a reader may imagine and thus focus on the personality of the other, while also permitting himself to be opened by difference in the fictional. As Rosenblatt argued, literary imagination is twofold: it permits self-knowledge, but it also entails defamiliarisation, or the need to reassess oneself and others in light of new experiences characterised by degrees of difference or otherness.

Moreover, the palimpsestuous in H.D.'s work can legitimately feed into recent work analysing H.D.'s occult orientation, especially in the late 1940s and 1950s. Scholars now recognise that H.D. believed in reincarnation, even if she could not recall her own past selves.³⁹ But as Matte Robinson has said, the important point in this belief was its capacity for H.D. to understand relationships: 'Her remembering has to do with *finding a community*, with seeing her various circles as repeating patterns'.⁴⁰ H.D.'s remembering was indeed romantic, although as I shall show in my later discussion of *The Walls Do Not Fall*, it was also modernist. 'The romantic idea of man', write David Roberts and Peter Murphy, 'springs from the sense of our irreducible embeddedness in a particular humanity'.⁴¹ Romanticism seeks to remember the past in order to 'recover a living relation to tradition'.⁴² By thinking according to existential time and traversing across the pleated folds of history, H.D. sought alternative presentations of her experience which she believed could connect her to others who were no longer alive: 'the universal is thus realized in and through particularity' – an act which is engineered by 'the

³⁹ Matte Robinson, *The Astral H.D.: Occult and Religious Sources and Contexts for H.D.'s Poetry and Prose* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), p. 17.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 20, original emphasis.

⁴¹ David Roberts and Peter Murphy, *The Dialectic of Romanticism* (London: Continuum, 2005), p. 4.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 3.

synthesizing powers of the productive imagination'.⁴³ H.D. imagined a synthesis of universal human experience in the particularity of personal analogues, and thereby in this instance identifies more easily with romanticism than Rosenblatt, who focused on its concern with the 'journey' and ultimately transcended romanticism's understanding of the role of aesthetic experience, because she sought an institutional telos for it.

I believe that Janice Robinson was along the right lines in 1982 when she connected the palimpsest to a form of consciousness – a way of processing experience.⁴⁴ During her visit to Egypt in 1923, H.D. came into contact with symbols on the temple wall – hieroglyphs through which she read the story of her own life:

The substance of H.D.'s discovery was that her most deeply felt personal experiences were recurring realities of human experience. Everything that had happened to her had happened before, in other cultures, in other times. This substantiation – the objective existence of hieroglyphs – brought her personal experience within the domain of the impersonal [...] These life energies, translated by the mind into visual images, exist outside the individual self; they are collective images of a culture.⁴⁵

Robinson is simply mirroring what Roberts and Murphy say about the universal and the particular, although she emphasises the release to be had by layering personal experience in what seems more impersonal; one avoids the embarrassment of self-exposure at the same time as connecting oneself to a wider culture. Yet Dillon's term 'palimpsestuous' makes sense when describing H.D.'s stance, because it is the spirit of the palimpsest that matters rather than the

⁴³ Ibid., p. 4.

⁴⁴ Robinson, *H.D.*, p. 56.

⁴⁵ Ibid., pp. 367-68.

artefact itself. In themselves, hieroglyphs are not intrinsically palimpsests (though they may be accidentally so): to be a palimpsest an original or older text needs to seep through visibly into a newer text written over it. H.D.'s consciousness was palimpsestuous because she superimposed otherwise disconnected experiences on otherwise disconnected texts.

It is the desire to superimpose that becomes palimpsestuous in H.D.'s work. And the link is based on an existential connection devised by H.D. herself: texts become 'points of [experiential] location'.⁴⁶ As H.D.'s literary executor, Norman Holmes Pearson, said: 'one is swept up into a knowledge of one's identity by the similarities of other lives and other races'.⁴⁷ In 'H.D. by Delia Alton', H.D. explained her method in *White Rose and the Red*, which draws parallels between her experience and that of the Pre-Raphaelite model, Elizabeth Siddall:

something of my early search, my first expression or urge toward expression in art, finds a parallel in the life of Rossetti and Elizabeth Siddall. So, as a very subtle emotional exercise, I go over and over the ground, find relationships or parallels between my own emotional starvation and hers, between a swift flowering soon to be cut down, in her case, by death, in mine, by a complete break after War I, with the group of artists described in *Madrigal* [*Bid Me to Live*].⁴⁸

In articulating a palimpsestuous relationship between Elizabeth Siddall's Pre-Raphaelite story and her own, H.D. is veering round (as in *The Mystery*) in an experiential meeting with her subject material, allowing her understanding of herself to be transformed by the transaction or experience. Although in time and place the stories may not 'relate to one another', H.D. feels compelled imaginatively to 'jump from one psychological dilemma to another, across the

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 72.

⁴⁷ L. S. Dembo (ed.), 'Norman Holmes Pearson on H.D.: An Interview', *Contemporary Literature* 10 (1969): 435-46, p. 441.

⁴⁸ H.D., 'H.D. by Delia Alton', p. 194.

years'.⁴⁹ From her experience of loss and separation, she finds a companion in Elizabeth, whose experience mirrors H.D.'s, but who also retains some detachment from H.D.'s own self. The distance, made aesthetic in her work, between self and other is thus a healing one for H.D. (though it cannot be for Elizabeth, other than through her fictional legacy in H.D.'s writing). That Elizabeth is a Pre-Raphaelite is significant in so far as she is part of the Morris circle, explored in Chapter 2. H.D. came into possession of a table William Morris owned, and it was on this table that she received the messages from the dead RAF airmen in London during World War Two. Morris's table was a cause of both her self-identified vocation as a wise woman, but also an indirect cause of her abandonment by Hugh Dowding, who repudiated her messages. It is this sense of 'emotional starvation' which enabled H.D. to connect herself to Elizabeth, as well as her rejection by Ezra Pound during her early years in London – a feeling of abandonment by a man she once trusted.

Later, in *Helen in Egypt*, H.D. also depicts a woman (Helen) whose story resembles her own in a palimpsestuous manner. Helen 'achieves the difficult task of translating a symbol in time, into timeless-time or hieroglyph or ancient Egyptian time. She knows the script, she says, but we judge that this is intuitive or emotional knowledge'.⁵⁰ Helen's stance is aesthetic; like Delia in *Sword*, Helen sensuously follows her traces of emotional direction among the pleated folds of time. This is a 'difficult task': the text in front of us may not be obviously palimpsestuous or call forth palimpsestuous consciousness in a reader; the external fictional world may seem somewhat removed from a reader's familiar environment and experiences – their discourse world, to echo Text World Theory. In other words, there may seem to be little scope for personalist textual sociability. But delineating any links evoked, especially at a work's emotional core (recall Rosenblatt's example of authority struggle), may permit the 'symbol in

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 204.

⁵⁰ H.D., *Helen in Egypt* (New York: New Directions, 1961), p. 13. Further quotations from this text are given in parentheses in the main body.

time' (the text) to connect to 'timeless-time' or to more universal experiential points of location. Gazing into a crystal-text, 'the crystal will reflect the past / and that present-in-the-past' (204). H.D. is positing a clear link between integrative knowledge (or what she calls 'intuitive or emotional knowledge') and sociability – the ability to connect to others through palimpsestuous consciousness.

Going over the lives of others, we come to understand in an aesthetic sense that 'life manifests through us; we are its various forms: Helen, Iseult, Persephone, and Circe are the same girl'.⁵¹ While these women are particular to H.D.'s situation, it is important to see that people – male and female, real and fictional – are brought together through the reader's location of a similar experience, emotion, attitude, or resemblance; it is a reader's sense of sociability which achieves the connections. The work of art 'is our experience [...] stripped of our ego or personal identity', says Robinson.⁵² According to Pearson, H.D. could write poems 'better and more frankly about herself using [Greek myth] than she could if she simply said, "I, I, I." To say "Helen" is really to free oneself'.⁵³ To say 'Helen' is to be released from starting all over again, 'because what she had to say at this time had been said before, quite well, by [the Greek poet]'.⁵⁴ So there is a slight tension in H.D.'s practice due to her interest in both the experience and the person: in her apprehension of the otherness of someone else's experience, and yet also in her recognition that she herself also has a claim upon the experience, recognising that 'life manifests through us'. Differences and otherness are worked through by meeting at the point of recognition; unless the recognition – the identification – occurs (which at the very least happens at the level of transactional language cognition), there can be no appreciation of otherness, still less greater self-knowledge regarding one's own life experiences.

⁵¹ Robinson, 'H.D.', p. 426.

⁵² Ibid., p. 361.

⁵³ Demo, 'Norman Holmes Pearson', p. 441.

⁵⁴ Robinson, 'H.D.', p. 102.

Whereas Rosenblatt's context is learning situations in English studies, in which learning is not only assumed but a required and measurable outcome of such study, H.D. is freer to explore other outcomes of engagement between self and other in the literary experience. While her palimpsestuous consciousness is concerned with how individuals process and make sense of their experience by engaging with other people's, Dillon's comment that 'palimpsestuous' is one remove from 'incestuous' is instructive for another aspect of H.D.'s interest in the palimpsestuous, and which complicates the nature of learning to be had from identification.

In superimposing her own experience upon that of others, and by exploring the ways her characters transact with one another via aesthetic experience, H.D. points toward attachment as both a valuable goal of such experience and also a different conception of imaginative growth, one which is at once more personal and also more viscerally social than Rosenblatt's. 'Helen' enables H.D. to tell her own story with protective distance, but it also enables her to superimpose herself onto Helen in a form of emotional and possibly proto-physical, almost incestuous attachment. Helen was H.D.'s mother's name, and calling herself Helen not only enabled H.D. to deal with personal experiences, but it also offered her a space or womb she could enter in which to re-connect passionately with the great 'sea-mother' (300).⁵⁵

As Robinson insists, H.D.'s attachment to the mother figure was shared and stimulated by her contact with D. H. Lawrence around 1915-16 – the period covered in *Paint it Today* and recalled in *Bid Me to Live* (1960). In this novel, Julia (the H.D. character) tells Rico (Lawrence): 'I need a great-mother as much as you do'.⁵⁶ H.D. had been moved by the 'mother poems' in

⁵⁵ See Susan Stanford Friedman, *Psyche Reborn: The Emergence of H.D.* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1981), pp. 229-272, for a feminist reading of *Helen*. Since the 1980s feminist theory has explored the ways in which 'gynotexts' are often concerned with the mother figure, thus emphasising the pre-Oedipal stage of growth, where the mother and the semiotic are more significant than the father and the symbolic order. See Deborah Kelly Kloepfer, *The Unspeakable Mother: Forbidden Discourse in Jean Rhys and H.D.* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989).

⁵⁶ H.D., *Bid Me to Live* (New York: New Directions, 1984), p. 182.

Lawrence's *Amores* (1916), which evoked the death of his mother, Lydia, in 1910.⁵⁷ By the late 1950s, it seems that in H.D.'s mind, *Bid Me to Live* (the Julia-Rico story of decades ago) and *Helen* were intimately connected; when the book jacket of a (Classically reminiscent) seascape came for *Bid Me to Live*, she wrote: 'I greet the Sea. The Sea encompasses me, encompasses my Book. The Sea envelopes me. The Sea is a "jacket," a folder around me, around my Book'.⁵⁸ H.D. invokes the Sea (capitalised as a proper noun) for its uterine qualities, enfolding her in love in its specific incarnation within the pages of her story.

Ignited by the work of John Bowlby (and D. D. Winnicott) in the late 1960s, psychologists have sought to explain the centrality of attachment in human lives.⁵⁹ Although they recognise that different cultures have different visions of what attachment means, psychologists agree on the universal 'potential to become attached in particular ways in particular contexts'.⁶⁰ Attachment may have connotations of dependence, and we talk of becoming 'too attached' or 'clingy' towards someone. And of course, it is also possible to become attached to something or someone unhealthy. But in this context, to become attached to another in the literary experience is something that, potential ethical risks aside, should be encouraged.

Although not conspicuously drawing on the psychological school of attachment theory, Valentine Cunningham's chapter, 'Touching Reading', in *Reading After Theory* (2002), nevertheless speaks of the way in which readers can become attached to characters and experiences evoked in fictional worlds, perhaps allowing the metaphorical jackets of specific books to enfold them. His vision is important because of the educative potential he attaches to

⁵⁷ Robinson, *H.D.*, p. 109.

⁵⁸ Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 358.

⁵⁹ Fred Rothbaum et al., 'Attachment, Learning, and Coping: The Interplay of Cultural Similarities and Differences' in Michele J. Gelfand et al. (eds), *Advances in Culture and Psychology: Volume 1* (Oxford University Press Scholarship Online), pp. 1-85.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

this form of personal, experiential attachment to literature. According to Cunningham: ‘the reading begins in close bodily contact, which turns into close mental and emotional contact with text, a sequence of contacts in which the reading result is a scene of complex whole-person ethical instruction, deeply rooted in rationality but particularly in emotionality’.⁶¹ Cunningham’s discourse is distinctive and highly charged with Christian imagery, which tends to imbue emotional attachment in the literary experience with a spiritual aura. Cunningham’s discourse seems to resonate with Kireevsky’s concept of integral knowledge and the rationality that comes from the heart. Cunningham combines whole-person engagement with a literary work with an emphasis on transformation, or ‘ethical instruction’. Perhaps he is suggesting, like Kireevsky, that a different kind of knowledge or consciousness is required (integral knowledge) in order to re-orient oneself to the social world – to be re-instructed.

But Cunningham’s implicit debt to particularly Protestant conceptions of Scripture reading also complicates the nature of the attachment desired: he speaks of ‘a body of text, and the text as body, the body of the other, the text as other, to be consumed, ingested, in a memorial act, an act of personal reception and reflection, an inward event which is also an outward-facing act, an act of testimony, of worldly witness’.⁶² But this suggests that the text is a metaphorical body that no longer merely envelopes a reader through adhesive attachment, but can be problematically (because it is only a metaphor) ingested by the reader who is then transformed, as in the Eucharist, into an effective, transforming witness in the real world. There are problems with equating, even metaphorically, text-as-word with bodies, and thus claiming for ordinary textual engagement modes of attachment usually reserved for actual bodily, interpersonal contact. As I will now show, H.D.’s story, ‘The Greek Boy’, draws out these tensions, even in its simplicity. ‘The Greek Boy’ underscores the tensions regarding attachment and aesthetic

⁶¹ Valentine Cunningham, *Reading After Theory* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), p. 147.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 148.

experience because the artistic medium concerned is sculpture – an art form which both encourages physical engagement at the same time as underscoring its lack of plasticity and thus its separation from us as living human beings. Cunningham’s claim that reading can transform readers is not at issue; attachment theorists also believe that modes of attachment are crucial for learning and development.⁶³ The problem is concerned with the consequences of eliding reading texts with actual embodied interpersonal contact and attachment, or with that which would push palimpsestuous consciousness and literary imagination beyond its reasonable boundaries if the material to be engaged with is restricted to printed text.

‘The Greek Boy’, still unpublished, is very simple in its plot: a schoolboy (Tommy) we assume to be an immigrant or at least a guest in London, is staying with his uncle (Harry) and they are visiting The British Museum. Harry leaves Tommy alone in the museum while he goes to the bank. At this point Tommy engages with the statues when one of them, the Greek boy, comes alive and starts talking to Tommy. The remainder of the story concerns what they say to each other, until Tommy returns to his uncle and they go home.

Tommy’s isolation is established from the outset: ‘I’m lonely’ are Tommy’s first words, which are repeated in the second paragraph.⁶⁴ An immigrant, Tommy is dejected in London – an ‘old’ city in which all he sees is ‘dry and dull’ (2). Harry tells Tommy that they must see a room full of ‘broken old stained marble things’ – the fragments that Tommy finds hard to value in their incomplete status (1, 2). Once Harry leaves for the bank, Tommy is left to transact with the art by himself, when ‘a slender ray filtered through the skylight. It touched the graceful figure of one of the Greek Boys on horseback’ (2). Here the ray of light that physically touches the Greek boy initiates Tommy’s meaningful engagement with the work. At the moment

⁶³ Rothbaum et al., ‘Attachment, Learning, and Coping’.

⁶⁴ H.D., ‘The Greek Boy’ (c. 1911), p. 1. H.D. Papers, Yale University. Further references to this text are given in parentheses in the main body.

Tommy repeats to himself, 'I'm cold – dear me – I'm lonely', the Greek boy appears and asks Tommy why he is lonely (3).

H.D. focuses more on Tommy's thoughts of the Greek boy than on the boy's thoughts of Tommy. Initially, all Tommy can see is the otherness of the boy – his feminine figure and different dress – 'with only half his clothes on' (3-4). They talk about bathing in winter and what is 'sensible' or not, thus moving into the merits of particular learned judgments. The Greek boy sees Tommy's loneliness differently: 'Are not your father and mother the great State?' (5). When the Greek boy thinks that Tommy is a 'barbarian' because he is not Athenian or Spartan, 'something blazed in Tommy's cheeks, – his eyes flamed' (5). Having connected with the boy by listening to him, Tommy's responses lead him to wrestle with the boy, so that 'in a moment he was lying at the feet of the Greek boy. He couldn't tell how it had happened' (5). When the Greek boy questions what he knows about the physical contact of wrestling, Tommy is 'discomforted' (6). He is jolted into consciousness, defamiliarised, by being asked to think reflexively about his learning from the physical contact with what is ostensibly a statue (an artwork). Tommy and the Greek boy compare notes about their particular learning communities and how what these know and teach is able to render a living space 'wonderful' (6). So enamoured by Tommy, the Greek boy whisks him away, out of the Museum, to the Elders where Tommy is invited to share what he knows – to dialogue with the Greek teachers. At the moment when they reach out to touch him, Tommy is woken by his uncle (8). The touch that the Elders were about to bestow upon Tommy is translated to his uncle's touch, which suggests perhaps that Tommy's deeply involved transaction with the Greek boy has changed how he sees the possibilities for contact in his own world, which is no longer a lonely and isolating place, but one redolent with potential learning rooted in warm attachment.

By focusing on Tommy's experiential journey, 'The Greek Boy' can be read as reinforcing Cunningham's vision of 'touching reading', or the ways in which fictional or

aesthetic worlds can reach out to us and we to them. But the fantasy genre in which ‘The Greek Boy’ can be placed complicates this because to all intents and purposes, Tommy does actually engage in physical contact with the boy, and this actual touching is the basis for growth in learning. On one level, Tommy adopts a palimpsestuous consciousness, in which he is able to insert his own situation in that of a fragment from the past; he actually engages in an aesthetic transaction. On another level, though, the palimpsestuous thrives on attachment because it pushes the realistic boundaries of aesthetic experience: it is no longer a purely psychological or even affective process, but an actual bodily one as well.

The central issue at stake is how far can literary imagination foster personal connection with others within the transactional literary experience? There seems to be something deeply attractive about literary imagination which makes some thinkers, including Rosenblatt, extol its virtues. The attraction lies in the contemplative, sensuous, and affective way in which some works of literature can engage our attention and help us feel more integrated as people. Literature enables readers to experience at their own pace, to indulge in pauses, retreats, and speculations in a way that other kinds of art do not. Perhaps we become attracted to specific characters, or to a vivified historical milieu, or to a particular experience which is depicted. The transactional theory foregrounds a person’s sensuous engagement with such elements because of their potential to increase a person’s self-knowledge while also broadening their insight into what it means to be human (as well as myriad of more specific themes which are unique to the reader in question).

And yet, by foregrounding the possibility and desirability of attachment between readers and literature, H.D. helps to expose the limits of literary imagination. As with Tommy, we are sometimes aware of the inertness of literature (as with sculpture in the Museum) as well as its capacity to animate our imaginations. Perhaps we only sense ‘the *dead* hand of the past’ (to echo Rosenblatt, emphasising the irony of a dead touch). Such ‘inertness’ may even occur

because a reader is *too* attached to a fictional element, so that the object of his desire becomes unobtainable. By highlighting the relationship between the palimpsestuous and attachment, H.D. foregrounds its capacity to thwart as well as warm.

Drawing on Leo Bersani's concept of 'self-shattering *jouissance*' – a concept also developed by Lacan – Anita Phillips has argued that 'any intense experience – sex, art, even fleeting, momentary perceptions like the effect of inhaling the scent of a flower – can lead to an overpowering, self-shattering emotion'.⁶⁵ The palimpsestuous may well enable us to see some books like jackets which can enfold us in a womb-like manner, ushering us into a blissful state of attachment which can console us in our loneliness, but there is also a sense in which there may be felt an irreconcilable gulf between reader and literary work, when we are reminded that what we have become attached to in the fictional world is not as reciprocal as we may imagine. The literary work will always be somewhat ungraspable, almost petrified like the Greek boy in The British Museum, and we might only realise this at the self-shattering tipping point of a deeply engaging aesthetic experience. Cunningham's metaphor of 'touching reading', therefore, needs to be qualified by emphasising that the physical artefact of a book is no substitute for connecting with actual people, and that even fictional characters and situations may prove tantalisingly unreal at the point of self-shattering *jouissance*. Literary imagination has its important function and pleasures, but it is not the whole story; it should not be made to over-reach itself.

I now go on to argue that Rosenblatt's interest in cultural pluralism represents a potential solution to the limits of literary imagination. If readers are ultimately limited in the extent to which they may connect with other personalities in *literature* (because they are imagined, and because the book is not a person either), they have an important role in trying to connect with real people in the classroom, and in the wider society as well.

⁶⁵ Anita Phillips, *A Defence of Masochism* (London: Faber and Faber, 1999), p. 39.

Re-envisioning Human Relations

Rosenblatt, Cultural Pluralism, and a Wiser America

This section on cultural pluralism constitutes an important shift in the arc of the overall thesis, whereby the attention is focused more outwardly, away from the imaginative life of the individual, towards the individual's relationship to society. Chapter 4 then continues and deepens this outward focus by viewing the individual more extensively within an educational context. Rosenblatt's political commitment to democracy forms the bedrock for her transactional theory, yet her theory also argues that literary experiences, and especially literary imagination, can feed back into the development of democracy. There is thus a kind of ecosystem in Rosenblatt's work – a cycle from democracy to literature and back to democracy: democracy and the transactional literary experience seem to be mutually reinforcing. Cultural pluralism is simply one of Rosenblatt's more focused attempts to state the way in which literary imagination can serve democracy. Human differences are considered, but the goal is to find ways of connecting people and building a society in which people can live together in greater harmony. Rosenblatt further crystallises the link between integrative modes of knowing and forms of personal connection or sociability, but she expresses this link through the practical realm of politics.

Weaving through Rosenblatt's writing from the 1940s to her death is a profound preoccupation with human relations, and particularly how different groups in American society might negotiate their differences and establish a ground of unity from which to nurture the individualities of all. For Rosenblatt, imaginative participation in the literary experience was always a means for individuals to understand others in society beyond the literary work, to enter into conversation with them about their way of life, their values, and their vision of what a good life could be. And as we have seen by looking at H.D.'s work, such attention directed

beyond the literary work may well be a blessed release from the pain of experiencing the limits of literary imagination.

Although the social aspect of literary experience has important classroom implications, such as decentred teaching and reoriented learning outcomes (see Chapters 1 and 2), what I wish to do now is to show how Rosenblatt's integration of cultural pluralism as a paradigm of human relations can speak more widely to the work of literary critics as well as student learners. The project of a wiser America – a more humane, liberated, and creative society – was to be fuelled by the re-imagining of literary-critical writers as Whitmanian literati: individuals with a responsibility to image forth forms of productive human conversation about the big questions of how to live together in a land of increasing cultural difference. The preoccupation with the literatus then extends in the next section, to H.D.'s vision of the writer's role in *The Walls Do Not Fall*. To grasp how Rosenblatt appropriated Horace Kallen's concept of cultural pluralism, it is necessary to proceed at this point chronologically.

After the end of the Second World War Rosenblatt acted as editor for a special issue of *The English Journal*, dedicated to discussing ethnic relations in the United States and sponsored by the National Conference of Christians and Jews.⁶⁶ In the wake of the atomic bomb and an urgent need to assess the 'basic moral problems of our age', Rosenblatt established this journal issue as a platform for airing views in the context of English studies, which she aligned under the banner of 'cultural pluralism' – a term coined by the philosopher Horace Kallen in 1915, but which continued to be used throughout the twentieth century, particularly in the last third.⁶⁷ Although Kallen wrote an article for Rosenblatt's issue, entitled

⁶⁶ Louise M. Rosenblatt, 'Foreword', *The English Journal*, 36 (1946): 285-87, p. 287.

⁶⁷ Ibid, p. 285. See Horace M. Kallen, *Cultural Pluralism and the American Idea: An Essay in Social Philosophy* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1956). For a summary of different voices within cultural pluralism, see Antonia Pantoja et al., 'Towards the Development of Theory: Cultural Pluralism', *The Journal of Sociology and Welfare*, 4 (2014):125-146.

‘Of the American Spirit’, his theory of cultural pluralism is discussed here only obliquely.⁶⁸ But his idea is in fact very simple, and, as Rosenblatt’s husband, Sidney Ratner, wrote in 1984, it primarily aimed to supplant the assimilationist, White Anglo-Saxon Protestant (WASP) model of Americanisation popular in the 1910s, encapsulated in the metaphor of the ‘melting pot’.⁶⁹ Between 1890 and 1914 around 75 per cent of immigrants arriving in the United States, mostly via Ellis Island in New York, came from southern and eastern Europe and as such, challenged the assumed homogeneity of American identity for those whose roots went back far longer into the early Republic or colonial past.⁷⁰

Ratner’s discussion of Kallen’s theory is more instructive in this instance than turning to Kallen himself, given that Ratner’s article and the points he selected for discussion are deeply imbricated in Rosenblatt’s own thinking and vice versa. According to Ratner, therefore, at the heart of Kallen’s theory is a concern for the individual, and that the individual should be allowed and given the resources to develop freely and fully. Democracy was believed to be the political system most adept at safeguarding conditions in which the individual could develop. But in order for democracy to flourish, different cultural groups in America needed to work together, largely through conversation, toward creating the conditions of unity in which diversity could grow. The new metaphor became one of an ‘orchestration’ of ‘differents’, retaining their distinctiveness, but playing to the tune of American democracy.⁷¹

As in Randolph Bourne’s progressive vision of a ‘Trans-national America’ (1916), Rosenblatt’s cultural pluralism seeks the active creation of something distinctly American –

⁶⁸ Horace M. Kallen, ‘Of the American Spirit: An Open Letter to Teachers of English’, *The English Journal*, 36 (1946): 298-94.

⁶⁹ Sidney Ratner, ‘Horace M. Kallen and Cultural Pluralism’, *Modern Judaism*, 4 (1984): 185-200.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 185. See also Annette Debo, *The American H.D.* (Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Press, 2012), p. 18. In his ‘Trans-national America’ (1916) for *The Atlantic*, Randolph S. Bourne also sought to articulate the positive benefits of immigration for America, and questioned the very idea of an original American identity. <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1916/07/trans-national-america/304838/> (accessed February 6, 2017).

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 187.

something to which, say, immigrant Italians, Ukrainians, and Poles all might agree to work towards with more established communities such as the English and Dutch, in order that their Catholicism, Uniatism, or Congregationalism, say, might flourish. For in her foreword to this issue of *The English Journal*, Rosenblatt cautioned against ‘the existence of utterly distinct cultures in America rather than a single but pluralistic American culture, including a broad range of individual and group differences within its framework’.⁷² Differences were not permitted to be so ‘utterly distinct’ as to preclude the creation of a society in which all might coexist.

As the century progressed, Rosenblatt re-invoked her vision of cultural pluralism in the light of different social movements, using slightly different vocabulary, particularly in the wake of civil rights and the emergence of ‘ethnicity’ as a sociological term in the 1970s, and finally, ‘multiculturalism’ in the 1990s. Gordon Pradl has informed me that Rosenblatt’s student demographics at NYU (at least in the mid-1960s) were fairly homogenous (i.e. white), and due to Rosenblatt’s exacting standards, she never had a large cohort of doctoral students.⁷³ Pradl suggests that ‘her ideas could be seen as progressively helping the student revolution (including diversity) but her academic writing and teaching were before the dramatic changes that occurred in the late sixties’.⁷⁴ It was only after her retirement in 1972 that Rosenblatt seemed to speak more consistently and openly about progressive politics. Her tendency in the 1980s and 1990s in her interviews was to emphasise her politics, but perhaps overestimating the practical impact on her academic work of this activity earlier in her career.

The most significant publication of this early post-retirement period is Rosenblatt’s 1978 article for *Yale Review*, entitled ‘Whitman’s *Democratic Vistas* and the New “Ethnicity”’, which was also republished in 2005 in *Making Meaning with Texts*. In her 1982 interview for

⁷² Rosenblatt, ‘Foreword’, p. 285.

⁷³ Gordon Pradl, email to the author, April 6, 2017.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

Columbia University, Rosenblatt explained that in the mid-1970s, she perceived a condition in American society similar to that which Walt Whitman experienced a century earlier, after the Civil War.⁷⁵ In discussing Whitman's answer to the problem of how to reconcile the individual with the aggregate, Rosenblatt turned to Kallen's cultural pluralism and argued that it provided the model for dialoguing about 'political and social morality'.⁷⁶ Questioning the implications of the term 'ethnicity', Rosenblatt asked whether there 'is [...] room for the new ethnicity in Whitman's view of the state as an aggregate whose prime justification is that it creates the stable environment within which the individual can freely and fully develop?'⁷⁷ Or, focusing more explicitly on the recent interest in personal roots, Rosenblatt also asked: 'Does [Whitman's] concern for individuals joined in the solidarity of American nationality rule out the current quest for a narrower solidarity based on ethnic roots and ethnic memories?'⁷⁸ Essentially, Rosenblatt advances the cause of pluralism in her unwavering faith in democracy as the unitive force embracing diverse Americans. Taking Whitman's cue, Rosenblatt honours an individual's right to ethnic and cultural identification and self-creation; but she also urges that cultural cross-pollination is also a healthy and positive trait in Americans.

If it is true that literary imagination proves insubstantial as a holistic vehicle of attachment to other people, Rosenblatt highlights the other facet of the transactional literary experience, whereby readers discuss their literary experiences with one another and with an instructor. It is in the social aspect of literary discussion that individuals may recover what is sometimes lost in the private reading experience. In other words, the isolated reader is unable to connect with others in such a way as to foster democracy and pluralism; only in conversation can this difficulty be surmounted. The stress on collaborative reading and imaginative

⁷⁵ Rosenblatt, *Reminiscences*, p. 277.

⁷⁶ Rosenblatt, *Making Meaning*, p. 147.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 151.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

exploration also further crystallises the significance of the institutional context; the English degree becomes a crucial mechanism for not only coping with the limitations of private literary imagination, but also for rationalising the use of group conversations structured around programmes of learning.

While Kallen and Whitman provided intellectual sources for Rosenblatt's thinking on human relations, her own family experience surely explains the enthusiasm with which she entered into their thinking. For instance, she was influenced by her parents' response to the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) who were active in Lakewood, New Jersey, in the 1910s.⁷⁹ Understanding that the KKK was antipathetic toward Catholics, the secular Rosenblatts mingled with local Catholic society in order to show solidarity – in order to offer support in warding off threats to a stable, pluralistic society. Louise's father, Samuel Rosenblatt, was subsequently successful in getting town officials to pass an ordinance that anybody could march along the town's streets as long as their heads were not covered. According to Rosenblatt's son, Jonathan, the difference between the U.S. and Tsarist Russia, from whence Samuel and Jennie emigrated, lay in the fact that in the U.S. democracy was seen as 'an arena for political activity and political action in the open, public square'.⁸⁰ The private was tested out in the public sphere, so that in turn, an individual's personal life could develop freely and fully. Samuel and Jennie, unlike other immigrants, chose to make a complete break with their Russian-Jewish roots:

They didn't have the family ties that enriched, and sometimes bound, the lives of other young, first-generation immigrants. Their 'structural situation' [...] was wholly different and distinct from many other immigrants. And their personal ideology evidently meant they shucked off the garb of religion and 'old country' and 'old country's language'

⁷⁹ Jonathan Ratner, email to the author, July 13, 2015.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

that made, for example, the Lower East Side in New York City interesting and quaint to some outside it, rich and tradition-infused to others who lived within it.⁸¹

In coming to understand why Rosenblatt adhered so strongly to cultural pluralism as a pathway to democracy, it is important to see it as an operative, experiential reality in her family life – an ideology which enabled the Rosenblatts to become Americans, not in the WASP sense of the word, as assimilation, but rather, as individuals with their personal histories who wished to create a society bigger than any group to which they may have felt allegiance. In this respect, Rosenblatt differs from contemporary multiculturalist theorists such as the British political theorist Bhikhu Parekh, in that she tends to see ethnic self-containment as a danger to American democracy, whereas Parekh sees monocultural enclaves within a broader multicultural society in a fairly neutral, even positive light.⁸² Invoking Whitman, Rosenblatt says that the individual is more than his ethnic label: ‘He must be free [like Rosenblatt’s parents] to make his own choices, to seek out his own friends, to enter freely into other associations, other groups’.⁸³ It is in the ‘aggressive withdrawal’ of groups in which lies ‘the danger of an intensification of differences, the danger of competition, of separatism, of conflict’.⁸⁴

Towards the end of the century, this belief in cultural pluralism remained strong, particularly among liberals, and Rosenblatt self-consciously distinguishes it from multiculturalism, which she sees as ‘too limited because [students] should also be helped [via literary imagination] to value other backgrounds’.⁸⁵ The confidence with which she then says, ‘of course the unity [which binds society together] is democracy’, belies her unwavering belief

⁸¹ Ibid., July 14, 2015.

⁸² Bhikhu Parekh, *Rethinking Multiculturalism: Cultural Diversity and Political Theory* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2000).

⁸³ Rosenblatt, *Making Meaning*, p. 152.

⁸⁴ Ibid., pp. 153-54. See also Kallen’s stance in *Cultural Pluralism*, p. 55.

⁸⁵ Eugene F. Provenzo Jr., ‘Louise Rosenblatt Interview’, School of Education, University of Miami. 14 March 1999. <http://www.education.miami.edu/ep/rosenblatt/> (accessed online, June 17, 2015).

in the sovereignty of the individual and the appositeness of democracy to safeguard such sovereignty, against the erosion by enclaves. This amounts to an assumption that naturally, the individual should not only be *free* to make his own choices, often opposed to his ‘group’, but that, again like Rosenblatt’s parents, he probably *wants* to as well, which poses a problem.

Rosenblatt’s faith in the unifying potential of democracy and her ideology of cultural pluralism may strike us as somewhat naïve and at variance with her parallel commitment to the growth of individual persons. That she tends to assume that people are part of one or another group is just one symptom of her tendency towards generalisation in this area. People are more complicated and may have different and conflicting allegiances, while a discourse of American possibility and newness – the desire to create a ‘distinctively American spirit’, to recall Bourne’s phrase – may appear as a threat to the immigrant and their children who may already feel lost, displaced, and suffering a crisis of identity.⁸⁶

In which case, the value of literary imagination is paradoxically reinforced; it can be used to remedy the failures of that which is meant to alleviate *its* shortcomings. Literary imagination can help individuals to crystallise a symbolic sense of their primary world – the ‘world’ they first experienced in life – before branching out to engage others. As Seamus Heaney put it: ‘If you have a strong first world and a strong set of relationships, then in some part of you, you are always free; you can walk the world because you know where you belong, you have some place to come back to’.⁸⁷ And yet some people may struggle even to cognise a sense of their ‘first world’. Although not identical to immigrants in America, and with important differences, as an transnational adoptee I have nevertheless found myself facing two worlds, the old and the new, and yet I am still not really sure what my ‘first world’ is. I might experience a sense of what Betty Jean Lifton has referred to as ‘cosmic loneliness’ among

⁸⁶ Bourne, ‘Trans-national America’.

⁸⁷ Seamus Heaney, speech at Magherafelt Civic Reception, January 1996.

adoptees, or a ‘genealogical bewilderment’ which can manifest as insecurity with regard to precisely the kind of pluralism Rosenblatt advocates.⁸⁸ For those unsure of even belonging to a particular culture in the first place, literary imagination can offer a way of constructing a sense of self which addresses feelings of loneliness and bewilderment, before then beginning to engage with difference from a more secure position.⁸⁹

Thus, while cultural pluralism may be an ideal in principle, in practice a more flexible approach to navigating human relations may be necessary, consistent with the personalism underlying this thesis, which aims, where possible, to be sensitive to the distinctive situations of each person. As I mentioned in the main introduction to the thesis, Rosenblatt’s humanistic reification of democracy as the principal civilising force in America in fact raises questions about the manner in which human welfare can also be objectivised as an abstract concept, to which actual individuals may become enslaved. According to a personalist framework, the literary experience cannot, à la Rosenblatt and Pradl, serve both democracy and the human; one is always subordinated to the other. Personalists like Berdyaev invoke Jesus’s words that the Sabbath was in fact made for man rather than the other way round, that man is made for the Sabbath (which the Pharisees propounded); what is meant by this is that concepts which organise society in some way should be managed so that they serve actual people.⁹⁰ With Rosenblatt, the danger is that learners are put in the service of an abstract vision of democracy and cultural pluralism, which seems to be at odds with the kind of personalism implicit in her emphasis on an individual experience of literature. Rosenblatt envisages citizens as well as

⁸⁸ Betty Jean Lifton, *Journey of the Adopted Self: A Quest for Wholeness* (New York: Basic Books, 1994), p. 47; p. 68. See H. J. Sants, ‘Genealogical Bewilderment in Children with Substitute Parents’, *British Journal of Medical Psychology*, 37 (1964): 133-41.

⁸⁹ Nancy Newton Verrier’s famous work, *The Primal Wound: Understanding the Adopted Child* (London: BAAF, 2009) offers rich insight into the adoptee’s quest for selfhood. Colleagues in Leeds who run reading groups for refugees report a similar phenomenon, whereby literary experiences can help displaced persons work through their experience of dislocation.

⁹⁰ Nicolas Berdyaev, *The Destiny of Man*, trans. Natalie Duddington (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1945), p. 107.

individual human beings, which, as the nineteenth-century Russian thinker Vladimir Solovyov wrote, is detrimental to the latter: for ‘as soon as we put alongside of the natural primary basis of all rights an artificial one, citizenship, there open up wide possibilities of declaring this or that group of men to be in a special position as citizens, or rather, as *not*-citizens, and of depriving them of all human rights under the pretext that those rights belong to citizens only’.⁹¹ Isaiah Berlin reiterated a similar point in the 1950s by turning to the thought of the nineteenth-century Russian thinker, Aleksandr Herzen. Herzen may well in fact have influenced Berdyaev in his antipathy towards abstract concepts of humanity in general. What Berlin (via the thought of Herzen) emphasises and brings into the twentieth century, however, is the persistent danger of concentrating on remote ideas about the human at the expense of attention and care for the concrete, existential human.⁹² To echo my Introduction, it signals a preference for personalism over humanism as a framework for articulating literary experience.

Rather than extolling the virtues of an idea of democracy or cultural pluralism, what seems more fruitful is to encourage ways of relating to others which are provoked through sharing literary experiences, debating the complexities of human behaviour with an openness to ambiguity. Rather than ‘indoctrinat[ing] openly the basic concepts of a democratic system’, we can strengthen Rosenblatt’s interest in imaginative participation in the experiences of others as a way of fostering, not a democratic system, but a personalist care for actual, concrete human beings – a care which escapes the confines of any political system.⁹³ Indeed, this seems to me to capture the spirit of Rosenblatt’s thought. What she cares most about is the ability of individuals to grow in self-knowledge as well as the capacity to relate to others in healthy ways.

⁹¹ Vladimir Solovyov, *A Solovyov Anthology*, ed. S. L. Frank (London: Saint Austin Press, 2001), p. 52, original emphasis.

⁹² Isaiah Berlin, *Russian Thinkers* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1994), pp. 86-87. Both Herzen and Berlin approach the critique of abstractions from a non-Christian perspective, however.

⁹³ On indoctrination, see Gordon M. Pradl, *Literature for Democracy: Reading as a Social Act* (Portsmouth, NH: Boynton / Cook, 1996), p. 87. I am also aware that even the word ‘care’ can be problematic; a state’s ‘care system’, for example, can be anything but caring.

How this is achieved in the literature classroom is really an open question; Rosenblatt offers some pointers by couching literary discussion in terms of cultural pluralism and democracy, but we might be on safer ground if we relegate the political to a less intrusive space, allowing more emphatically for the unpredictability of the (inter)personal in the classroom.

In fact, as with the need to recognise the limitations of literary imagination, there is a correlative need to appreciate the limits of reaching personal connection, both between people, and within the individual herself, relating the various parts of her life into a sense of ‘wholeness’, as Lifton says. Part of a reconfigured literary studies would therefore entail encouraging openness in coping with the limitations of oneself and also of others, which in Chapter 4 I shall show is one of the identified hallmarks of wisdom.

A more personalist way in which Rosenblatt suggests literary studies can promote the negotiation of human relations and differences within a greater unity, however, is by invoking, along with her husband, Whitman’s vision of the literatus. In his 1984 article Ratner references Rosenblatt’s Whitman article, in which she expressed the importance of the ‘humanistic writer’, or ‘literatus’ who, ‘through their words, their writings, their learning, would foster a healthy moral substratum for our national life, permeating the American mentality’.⁹⁴ The concept of the literatus ‘articulates our present-day need for writers, scholars, scientists, professional people, and political leaders, who will do more than express our disillusionments, intensify our alienation, or dwell on our separateness’.⁹⁵ For Whitman, the literatus has a quasi-religious function – ‘the priest departs, the divine literatus comes’.⁹⁶ Reading Whitman one realises how far Rosenblatt stripped the literatus of his manifestly quasi-religious function.⁹⁷

⁹⁴ Rosenblatt, *Making Meaning*, p. 146. Ratner, ‘Horace M. Kallen’, p. 198.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 155.

⁹⁶ Walt Whitman, *Democratic Vistas* (Washington, DC: Smith and McDougal, 1871), p. 6.

⁹⁷ For a thoughtful reading of Whitman’s original text, which discusses his vision of democracy and literature’s role in fostering this, see Chapter 7 in Stephen John Mack, *The Pragmatic Whitman: Reimagining American Democracy* (Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Press, 2002), pp. 135-59.

Rosenblatt's literatus need not have faith in God; rather, consistent with her humanism, her literatus, who can be a writer and thinker of any sort, must elevate the individual to the highest point in so far that he or she contributes to the nourishment of a democracy in which that elevation can happen. Rosenblatt's literatus brings people together based on mutual respect for the individuality of all. Unlike some of the writers Rosenblatt studied for her PhD on art for art's sake, the literatus does not range himself against society as a radical different – as somehow better than ordinary people. The literatus should embrace an expansiveness and generosity of spirit, perhaps most obvious in a nineteenth-century writer such as George Eliot or Tolstoy, than in a modern or modernist sense – although, as I will show, I think H.D. (among others) is an exception here.⁹⁸ In some ways, Rosenblatt is indirectly extending a discourse of nineteenth-century 'intelligentsia' – a Russian term for people who are not intellectuals, but rather 'a dedicated order, almost a secular priesthood' who are concerned with communicating ways of being as much as ideas.⁹⁹ She is also extending her commitment to a generalist vision of literary studies, whereby to be engaged with literature is to be engaged with socially relevant matters (see Chapter 2).

There are, of course, a number of risks with advocating the activity of a Whitmanian literatus, chief of which is incurring the accusation of elitism. In the previous chapter I discussed Rosenblatt's tendency to carve out an aristocracy of particularly sensitive individuals who may be especially receptive to engaging in literary experiences. However, I tried to qualify this tendency by framing it within a broader personalistic vision which necessarily entails a tendency to believe in an aristocracy of individuals equipped with specific gifts. Acknowledging Whitman's own personalism – 'his mystic sense of the individual' –

⁹⁸ The memoirs and unpublished journals (held in The British Library) of Lady Ottoline Morrell are an important source of insight into the ways in which specific modernists (such as Katherine Mansfield, Mark Gertler, and Virginia Woolf) self-identified as different to non-artistic or non-intellectual people. See also Miranda Seymour, *Ottoline Morrell: Life on the Grand Scale* (London: Faber and Faber, 2008).

⁹⁹ Berlin, *Russian Thinkers*, p. 117.

Rosenblatt sees the literatus as being somebody who has developed his particular gifts and talents in such a way that he can share these with others by way of contributions to the wider society.¹⁰⁰ No longer a priest, the literatus is simply one person speaking to another; there are no pretensions to superiority. While Rosenblatt is fairly unconcerned about the manner in which such contributions might materialise, her central effort is to place responsibility on thoughtful people to engage with one another and to set forth new visions of society as well as critiques of the status quo.

I now turn to H.D.'s poem, *The Walls Do Not Fall*, and read it as an exploration of the role of the literatus. Although H.D.'s vocabulary is different to Rosenblatt's, her vision of the scribe accords with a number of the central qualities of the literatus. In particular, H.D.'s scribe engages in a palimpsestuous reconstruction of values as part of a broader modernist quest. By looking to the past and experiencing it imaginatively, the scribe may discover values which have been lost and re-inscribe them for a contemporary audience. In other words, H.D.'s vision of the scribe crystallises the link between literary imagination, personal connection, and the literatus, which have been explored in this chapter thus far. It also moves us closer to the theme of wisdom, which is the subject of the final chapter.

'Searching the Old Highways': *The Walls Do Not Fall*

In 'H.D. by Delia Alton' (written 1949-50), H.D. wrote that her war trilogy of poems, of which *The Walls Do Not Fall* (written 1942) is the first, 'belong[s] to the rhythm and vibration of the experience recorded in *The Sword Went Out to Sea*'.¹⁰¹ I take this sentiment to mean that *The Walls Do Not Fall* is a poem about a particular kind of consciousness – one which apprehends new possibilities and is intimately concerned with art and its relationship to the past. In *Sword*,

¹⁰⁰ Rosenblatt, *Making Meaning*, p. 144.

¹⁰¹ H.D., 'H.D. by Delia Alton', p. 199.

the emphasis is on finding ways of expressing the need to follow ‘traces of direction’ in aesthetic experience. In *The Walls Do Not Fall*, the focus is on delineating the role of the one who undertakes such activity.

In a 1943 letter to Pearson, H.D. explained that this poem concerned the ‘protection of the scribe’.¹⁰² She spoke of ‘our PROFESSION’ – literature – as if to defend it against accusations of being ‘pathetic’ (31 (original emphasis), 32). Almost echoing Shelley, H.D. tells Pearson that ‘the “writer” is the original rune-maker, the majic-maker [*sic*], his words are sacred – that is what it is’ (32). H.D. explains that she and Bryher (her partner) were provoked by a letter in the literary review journal, *Life and Letters Today* (1928-50), from a girl who questioned the vocation of the writer ‘in the future world-reconstruction’ once the war ended (32). In response, *The Walls Do Not Fall* is offered (to Pearson) as a modern-day defence of literature, and of the role of the writer more broadly. H.D. even hints that her focus is philosophical (or theoretical), thus extending the remit of the writer to include the setting forth of ideas as well as aesthetic visions; indeed, the two are intricately linked for H.D. However, in her poem she focuses on the way in which the ‘scribe’ is linked to Hermes, Ancient-of-Days, and Ancient Wisdom and therefore the scribe’s primary function is to bring forth ‘*things new and old*’ (33, original italics). Where *Sword* sets up the notion of ‘pleated folds’ and the importance of entering into existential time in order to traverse history for ‘traces of direction’, *The Walls Do Not Fall* foregrounds the scribe’s vocation in society as one who undertakes this existential activity of negotiating between the old and the new, to present ideas in an aesthetically vivid manner which justifies the role of art in society. In short, H.D.’s scribe, like Rosenblatt’s literatus, is an individual invested with the task of highlighting and formulating new ways for people to connect with one another.

¹⁰² Donna K. Hollenberg (ed.), *Between History and Poetry: The Letters of H.D. and Norman Holmes Pearson* (Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Press, 1997), p. 33. The following immediate references are included in parentheses in the main text.

The poem begins by setting the scene: railings are taken from London squares to be turned into armaments, and the bombs or ‘incidents’ leave edifices spliced open so that what was once sealed now becomes open to view. Comparing the situation to Pompeii, the speaker asserts that ‘we know the crack of volcanic fissure [...] pressure on heart, lungs, the brain / about to burst its brittle case / (what the skull can endure!)’.¹⁰³ H.D.’s alliteration (‘brain’, ‘burst’, ‘brittle’, ‘bewilderment’, ‘bedevilment’, ‘bone-frame’, ‘burnt’) contributes to her project of stressing the way in which human beings have been plundered internally; ‘yet the frame held’ (511). Existing structures, such as the railings which fence in neat squares, have been removed and it is in this condition that ‘Spirit announces the Presence’ in an apocalyptic dystopia where only the frames of human beings survive (510).

It is in such an environment that the value of literature can be undermined: ‘charms are not, they said, grace’ (511). A poet’s rhythm has become ‘the devil’s hymn’ and the poet is told ‘your stylus is dipped in corrosive sublimate’ (512). The general question people are asking seems to be whether writers can ‘scratch out / indelible ink of the palimpsest of past misadventure’ (512). In other words: what can be salvaged and turned into a vision of hope? Is not the palimpsest of the past steeped in ‘misadventure’? And so, as in a Greek play, a response is made to the call: the stylus is turned into a healing caduceus (the staff of Hermes) which, ‘evoking the dead, / it brings life to the living’ (512). As with the Biblical Jonah who was trapped inside the stomach of a whale, the speaker in this poem finds the intransigence of being in an ‘indigestible, hard, ungiving’ situation a time for ‘living within’, in which ‘you beget, self-out-of-self, / selfless, / that pearl-of-great-price’ (513, 514). Stringing her words together in an alchemical, mnemonic fashion emphasises the transformative state of being forced into a more existential, inward state of being out of which comes the pearl of great price – a gospel of peace.

¹⁰³ H.D., *Collected Poems*, p. 510. Further references to this text are given in parentheses in the main body.

H.D.'s address to those who question the value of the scribe becomes more defensive as the poem proceeds: 'if you do not even understand what words say, / how can you expect to pass judgement / on what words conceal?' (517). The speaker seems to be suggesting that people who disparage the role of the writer in a time of war have in some way forgotten how to read and make meaning. Books have been taken away and used for the war effort, to be turned into cartridge cases (518). The 'fight for life' which justifies the removal of books is presented as an irony, for it is books, and the ability to read and make meaning with texts that is what will give us real life: for 'we take [books] with us / beyond death' – they are 'indelibly / stamped on the atmosphere somewhere, / forever' (518-19). Being 'stamped on the atmosphere' is a way of turning the efficiency of war on its head: the stamp of bureaucracy is turned into a mark of Ancient Wisdom which lives in the atmosphere – a nebulous region which cannot be contained or specified and thus pinned down; it belongs to everyone, everywhere.

Moreover, H.D. is honest about the trials of writers; in spite of the important function she attributes to them, they are beset by difficulties: 'we, the latter-day twice-born, / have our bad moments when // dragging the forlorn / husk of self after us, // we are forced to confess to / malaise and embarrassment' (521). 'Too old to be useful' and yet 'not old enough to be dead', H.D. affirms one special responsibility which belongs to the writer in spite of his difficulties: 'we are the keepers of the secret, / the carriers, the spinners // of the rare intangible thread / that binds all humanity // to ancient wisdom, / to antiquity' (523). 'Carrying' and 'spinning': these are the dual activities involved when turning a vision of human relations into a communicable piece of 'wisdom'. Carrying recognises the burden of the writer – the original impulse or idea or commitment which sets the writer off on his task of spinning. Spinning, on the other hand, evokes the activity of writing creatively, of setting forth an integrated vision of some aspect of life which is connected to the past and yet is resolutely intended for the present. Importantly, spinning intimates at a synthetic activity rather than an analytic one.

In his 'A Defence of Poetry', Shelley begins by positing a distinction between analysis and synthesis, which he frames as reason and imagination. Both are aspects of the mind: the former consists of 'contemplating the relations borne by one thought to another', and the latter 'as mind acting upon those thoughts so as to colour them with its own light' and then 'composing' new thoughts from the initial ones, 'each containing within itself the principle of its integrity'.¹⁰⁴ Imagination seems to be the more essential aspect of mind presented here: reason to imagination is 'as the shadow to the substance'.¹⁰⁵ Shelley's advocacy for the importance of imagination can be placed within a broader picture of this romantic binary of 'reason' and 'feeling', which I touched upon earlier in the chapter and in Chapter 2. In Russia, Kireevsky advocated 'integral thought' as a way of reconciling reason and emotion, and Shelley also suggests that it is imagination that conceives of thoughts which contain a principle of integrity and synthesis. The 'integral' is a synthetic orientation which fuses emotion and reason, resulting in a rationalism of the heart. I showed how Kireevsky's philosophy influenced Berdyaev's personalism, and thus how integral thinking could be reasonably placed as a central quality of personalism. In *The Walls Do Not Fall*, H.D. seems to be re-invoking romantic conceptions of creative activity centred on the imagination, which combines rationality and feeling; her vision is personalistic because she values the imaginative activity of individual scribes or writers.

By re-invoking romanticism, H.D. was herself setting forth her modernist project of bringing out of her mind things old and new; she was taking the lead in the kind of activity she advocated in her poetry. As Roberts and Murphy write, 'to be modern was not to be cut off from the past by an irreversible break [...] To be modern was to accept and to think together the creativity of imitation, in the form of renaissances, and the rich continuity of civilization'.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ Shelley, *The Selected Poems and Prose*, p. 635.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Roberts and Murphy, *The Dialectic of Romanticism*, p. 190.

Both romanticism and modernism, then, draw their ‘self-understanding from the quest to recover a living relation to tradition’, in H.D.’s case, of the vocation of the writer in society.¹⁰⁷ The ‘way of inspiration / is always open’, H.D. claims, wherein inspiration, which might be contiguous with imagination, ‘explains symbols of the past / in to-day’s imagery’ (526). Inspiration ‘merges the distant future / with most distant antiquity, // states economically / in a simple dream-equation // the most profound philosophy, / discloses the alchemist’s secret’ (526). Of course, H.D.’s own poetry, especially the poetry of the 1940s and later, is not at all ‘simple’ and, some may argue, not even ‘economical’. Indeed, the language of economy seems to jar with what the speaker in the poem said earlier about the need for poetry to transcend facile pretensions to utility. However, it seems that in this portion of the poem, H.D. is attempting to be just in claiming that ‘the way of inspiration’ is ‘open to everyone’. That is, if people revise their attitudes towards literature and philosophy and become more receptive to the powers of imagination, then the way of inspiration may become more apparent.

Part of the problem, it seems, is that ordinary people (or people who do not identify as artistic or intellectual) do not always realise that their own experiences matter – that they are active in the carrying and spinning processes outlined before: ‘no comment can alter spiritual realities / (you say) or again, // what new light can you possibly / throw upon them?’ asks an unidentified critic (539). And then H.D.’s speaker begins to explain:

my mind (yours),
your way of thought (mine),

each has its peculiar intricate map,
threads weave over and under

the jungle-growth

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 3.

of biological aptitudes,

inherited tendencies,
the intellectual effort

of the whole race,
its tide and ebb;

but my mind (yours)
has its peculiar ego-centric

personal approach
to the eternal realities,

and differs from every other
in minute particulars,

as the vein-paths on any leaf
differ from those of every other leaf

in the forest, as every snow-flake
has its particular star, coral or prism shape. (539-40)

This passage, rich in imagery pertinent to palimpsestuous consciousness, is notable for its explicit personalistic angle. When H.D. wrote to Pearson that her poem was in many ways an exercise in philosophy, it is a passage like this which confirms her supposition, for it is as much theory as poetry. The speaker homes in on the 'personal approach / to the eternal realities' which each one of us is able to access by the way of inspiration (imagination). H.D.'s task in this section of the poem seems to be to explain how the individual relates to the universal. Earlier in the chapter I wrote of the way the universal manifests in the particular, and H.D. affirms this belief by offering multiple images which position the specific and the general. Her

approach is poetic; we need not subscribe to beliefs in racial inheritance in order to benefit from her language.

Firstly, the poem highlights the existence of ‘eternal realities’ which seem contiguous with the earlier ‘spiritual realities’. What is eternal are certain human experiences and emotions. For H.D., the inalterability of spiritual realities seems connected with the prevalence of war, which is driven home as a recurring reality in human existence. Secondly, the poem draws attention to the intellectual configuration of each person as being unique. Each of us has a ‘peculiar intricate map’ where ‘threads weave over and under / the jungle-growth / of biological aptitudes’. Not only does the modern writer undertake to ‘spin’ new visions of human experience for a contemporary audience, but each writer himself is peculiarly spun, even biologically: there are various threads which are interwoven and which the mind has to assess – to work with or against. Despite our uniqueness, the emphasis is placed on sharing, as it is in Rosenblatt’s commitment to cultural pluralism. Human separateness needs to be overcome by seeking and recognising moments of identification and understanding with others. Affirming our personal configuration in a deeper way would then enable us to discern in which way we might contribute that unique insight into issues which concern others as well. Then, adopting a synthetic way of thinking, the writer who engages her imagination may be able successfully to undertake the original task which was questioned by the unnamed critic in the poem: ‘This search for historical parallels, / research into psychic affinities’ (539).

While H.D. is not specific about the role of reading literature in her defence of the writer, it seems that, like Rosenblatt’s *literatus*, her writer or scribe is a multi-functional being who can draw on philosophy as much as art in order to contribute to this important research into what draws humans together. Moreover, the emphasis on parallels and affinities can be explained, I think, in light of the way H.D. perceived the war to divide and isolate people from one another. Her insistence on the efficacy of the temple as a meeting place for lovers who

inaugurate existential time over clock time is linked to this drive towards synthesis and unity. And, as a metaphor for consciousness (the temple is also *tempora*), the link is clear: there is a particular way of thinking, of approaching the ‘eternal realities’, the ‘historical parallels’, and the ‘psychic affinities’ (unspecified though these are), which is conducive towards reconstruction – working out how the human race is to live together after what has seemed like cosmic destruction. Importantly, it is the personalist angle in H.D.’s vision which, like Rosenblatt’s, focuses our attention on the nature of this new kind of thinking. Finally, while H.D.’s poem concentrates on the effects of war, her ideas about the scribe hold value for times of peace as well. The value of H.D.’s work is simply that she was able to re-discover and reaffirm the ways in which the individual is connected to the universal; from a time of war, she was able to communicate a vision of the scribe which is for peacetime as well.

Conclusion

This chapter has sought to crystallise the link between transactional literary experience and what I have termed ‘personal connection’, to denote imaginative attachment to others in the literary experience as well as thought brought to bear upon human relations in society more generally. I have argued that Rosenblatt and H.D. offer a suitably personalistic understanding of imagination which connects ways of thinking and feeling and actual relationships. The function of personalist textual sociability lies in its amenability to conceive of imagination as offering potential increase in self-knowledge as well as broadening an individual’s existential horizons by encountering difference.

Furthermore, I have described the way in which a learner might carry out such imaginative work in terms of ‘aesthetic distance’ (Rosenblatt) and ‘palimpsestuous consciousness’ (H.D.). Both denote an attempt to layer one’s personal experience within another’s while still accommodating differences in specific forms of experience. H.D.,

however, reminds us that literary imagination has its limits; the attachment that can form between a reader and a fictional entity may be powerful, but it is never a substitute for actual connection between real people. This is partly why Rosenblatt was also interested in cultural pluralism as a way of defining ideal human relations in American society. Literary imagination was never an end in itself for her; it needed to serve the cultivation of democratic citizens who could cope with an increasingly pluralistic America. However, I have also cautioned using democracy and cultural pluralism as the justification for teaching English or engaging with literature, as this objectivises the human and undermines the personalism latent in the dynamics of the transactional literary experience.

Rosenblatt's invocation of the Whitmanian *literator* was her way of creating a role for the individual who seeks to present new images of human relations for the creation of a pluralistic America. Literary imagination is thus put in the service of an important social function; yet attention to the concrete human should always be foregrounded, whether this a fictional persona or other people in the interpretive project. H.D., on the other hand, engages in a romantic and modernist exploration of the vocation of the scribe – the individual who enters upon the way of inspiration in order to re-interpret historical parallels, psychic affinities, and eternal realities in accordance with his own specific, personal way of thinking and feeling. In other words, this chapter has shown that the *literator* and the scribe, or the thinker and the writer, need to approach literary imagination in a way that utilises personalist textual sociability as a way of framing their personal vision. Their own particular mapping of texts, or their own particular approach to existing materials, is the soil out of which distinctive research can grow which can actively speak to issues which may concern all of humanity via the medium of personal exploration.

However, this chapter has not addressed the nature of these eternal realities. The implication is that the *literator* and the scribe are engaged in spinning their personal approach

to Ancient Wisdom. But what is wisdom? The final chapter explores what it means to be in quest of wisdom in contemporary literary studies.

4. Literary Studies and the Quest for Wisdom

Throughout this thesis I have spoken of ‘being in quest of wisdom’, but have refrained from theorising this term until now. In this chapter I explore in turn the concepts of ‘quest’ and ‘wisdom’, and their value as educational frameworks for learning in literary studies. At this stage in the thesis, I draw more vigorously on the work of other thinkers to help theorise the quest for wisdom and the role of the transactional literary experience within this. While this thesis has always positioned H.D. and Rosenblatt as its principal thinkers whose thought has enabled me to delineate the intersections between relevant anthropologies, philosophies, and sociologies (Chapters 1-3), in this final chapter I turn more extensively to the work of educationalists and philosophers whose work resonates with this literary pair in order to arrive at a tentative but germane understanding of being in quest of wisdom.

The goal of this chapter is to fold a vision of being in quest of wisdom in literary studies into three existing areas of literary theory which circulate this concept but, I argue, have not addressed the pedagogical angle sufficiently, especially when wisdom is positioned as a valid learning objective. These areas of literary theory – the new literary humanism, affect, and ethics – are rightly interconnected, yet my argument is that my theory of the quest for wisdom via transactional literary experiences can offer pathways for synthesising these conversations in a particularly purposeful way, by couching the synthesis in a broader pedagogical framework, and, indeed, mission.

To speak of a ‘mission’ is to maintain Theory’s historical emphasis on critique and activism, intersecting philosophy and the actualities of concrete human experience. Indeed, this chapter is perhaps the most philosophical of all the chapters: instead of extended close readings of primary texts, there is a more sustained effort at analysing and synthesising concepts, in making connections and in drawing out implications for literary theory. In the conclusion to

the thesis, I go on to offer some further ideas as to how the quest for wisdom and the literary experience may be further enriched and applied. I shall now turn to the concept of ‘quest’, and stress its transformative potential by drawing on the work of two New York thinkers connected to Rosenblatt – the existentialist thinker, Maxine Greene, and her colleague, Jack Mezirow.

Transaction, Transformation, and Quest: Rosenblatt, Greene, Mezirow

Rosenblatt and the Role of the Language Arts Teacher

In Chapter 2 I argued that Rosenblatt’s position in *Literature as Exploration* was essentially generalist, in the sense of positing a broad diet of literary experiences which, through classroom discussion and reflection, may assist individual learners’ concentration on emotional and intellectual issues with which they happen to be especially preoccupied. It is worth remembering that *Literature as Exploration* was originally entitled *Literature and Human Values*, but was changed by Rosenblatt before its first publication because she worried it would seem ‘too stuffy’ and would in fact work against her by connoting character indoctrination, which she tried to combat through her emphasis on democratic testing and selecting of values.¹ In spite of this decision in the 1930s, in the 1950s and 1960s Rosenblatt designed a course at NYU entitled ‘Literature and the Crisis in Values’, which invokes her earlier essay from the 1940s entitled ‘Enriching Values in Reading’ (1949), in which confusion among apparently conflicting values could be addressed directly through the reading and study of (particularly nineteenth and twentieth-century prose) literature, which prompted such consideration through its sensitive and complex portrayal of human experiences.² By the mid-1980s, however, Rosenblatt wrote articles which directly address the role of the instructor in the language arts,

¹ Louise Rosenblatt, *The Reminiscences of Louise Michelle Rosenblatt*. 2 vols. Interview with Ed Erwin. New York: Columbia University Oral History Research Office. 22, 24 June and 13 and 15 July 1982, p. 133; p. 156.

² Ibid., p. 242. See also Louise M. Rosenblatt, ‘Enriching Values in Reading’ in William S. Gray (ed.), *Reading in an Age of Mass Communication* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1949), pp. 19-38.

framed as a generalist practice of helping students critically select values by which to live and make sense of their lives. It is at this point that she comes nearest to linking her transactional theory to the quest for wisdom, although in *Literature as Exploration* the emphasis on the contexts in which each reader is situated in the literary transaction is certainly in tune with these later articulations of value formation.

In her essay, 'Language, Literature, and Values' (1984), Rosenblatt tackled the value of the language arts in helping young people to come to terms with their agency in the world, with their responsibility and duty to choose among values by which to live. This essay foreshadows her more explicit evaluation of the language arts teacher's role set forth in her response to an article by George Henry for *English Education* which covered developments in English education departments. By 1986 the journal was under the editorship of Gordon Pradl, and it is Rosenblatt's (longer) draft essay to which I turn in this analysis. Pradl was instrumental in Chapter 2 in developing Rosenblatt's ideas about democracy within the context of classroom discussion about people's literary experiences. The emphasis on 'language arts' – a term which is unusual in British university English departments – is capitalised by Rosenblatt and Pradl because of its more encompassing remit. Indeed, in these two essays Rosenblatt is at pains to move away from English programmes focused exclusively on traditionally 'literary' areas, such as formalist analysis, textual scholarship, and literary and intellectual history. Starting from her transactional theory of human being in the world (see Chapter 1), Rosenblatt recapitulates her belief that the 'literary' only comes into existence when a predominantly aesthetic stance is adopted by a reader to evoke a work of art from the text. Therefore, it is the role of literary studies (conceived as part of the wider language arts) to oversee people's entire life in language, not simply with texts traditionally called 'Literature', although, as I have noted

throughout this thesis, Rosenblatt tended to prioritise texts which she believed could most successfully increase students' capacity to have deeper literary experiences.³

Rooted in her central philosophical commitment to the value of the individual, Rosenblatt values 'the individual reader's search for a personal sense of priorities that will guide sound choices in values in a changing world'.⁴ As I explored in Chapter 1, the emphasis on choice springs from her transactional view of existence, which involves 'selective attention' to phenomena in consciousness. Meanwhile, Rosenblatt's pragmatist inheritance from Dewey is visible in her insistence that the weighing of values be considered in light of their possible impact on 'actual human lives'.⁵ Rosenblatt justifies this 'basis of value judgment' because of her view of literature, which she believes offers the potential to experience aspects of human experience in emotionally coloured ways, and thus apply reason out of a matrix of feeling.

Quoting Dewey's *Human Nature and Conduct* (1922), Rosenblatt explains that 'rationality... is not a force to evoke against impulse and habit. It is the attainment of a working harmony among diverse desires'.⁶ In *Literature as Exploration* (reissued in 1983), moreover, Rosenblatt again invoked Dewey by saying 'that in actual life constructive thinking usually starts as a result of some conflict or discomfort, or when habitual behavior is impeded and a choice of new paths of behavior must be made. Such thinking, therefore, grows out of some sort of tension and is colored by it'.⁷ The transactional literary experience, which privileges the aesthetic in encouraging the emotional experience out of which 'constructive thinking' may grow, is therefore central to Rosenblatt's wider vision of value selection among the young

³ See Charles Gerrard, 'The Literary and the Ethical: Difference as Definition' in Elizabeth Beaumont Bissell (ed.), *The Question of Literature: The Place of the Literary in Contemporary Theory* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), pp. 19-47 for a distinction between 'literature' and 'Literature', the latter denoting something canonical.

⁴ Louise M. Rosenblatt, 'Language, Literature, and Values' in Stephen N. Tchudi (ed.), *Language, Schooling, and Society* (Upper Montclair, NJ: Boynton / Cook, 1984), pp. 64-80, p. 78.

⁵ Ibid., p. 78.

⁶ Ibid., p. 74.

⁷ Louise M. Rosenblatt, *Literature as Exploration*, 4th ed. (New York: MLA, 1983), p. 226.

people of America. It is central because of its embodiment of rationality mixed with emotion – the crucial ingredients in ‘constructive thinking’. While not using the language of the nineteenth-century Russian Slavophile thinker, Ivan Kireevsky, Rosenblatt approximates Kireevsky’s intuition about a ‘rationality of the heart’, which signals an emphasis on integrality in thought.

Importantly, Kireevsky’s intuition about thought found a correlate in the Russian term, *tsel'naya lichnost*, or ‘integral personality’.⁸ In other words, Kireevsky’s thought, which as I have said before, in some ways prefigures Berdyaev’s personalism, highlights a link between a way of thinking which connects emotion and reason, to the ongoing creation of an integral personality, and thus underscores the transformative potential of combining reason and emotion. As I shall argue, to understand wisdom as fundamentally existential and thus concerned with the subject opens possibilities for personal and social renewal, a sense of ‘wholeness’ which is liberating rather than restrictive. Yet as Rosenblatt articulates her fusion of emotion and reason, following Dewey, the personalistic angle is somewhat subdued.

Rosenblatt then demonstrates how the complexities attending selectivity might work through students’ responses to James Joyce’s *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Students are invited (by the pressures of the work but also by the teacher) to

join Stephen in his adolescent trying-on of one role after another [...]

They share with him the tension between positive values – the appeal of the order and mystery and power of the church and the appeal of the fullblooded life of the senses and the imagination – and between the camaraderie of his nationalist fellow-students and his desire to be free of all circumscribing allegiances. He must choose between things that

⁸ Aleksei Khomiakov and Ivan Kireevsky, *On Spiritual Unity: A Slavophile Reader*, trans. and eds. Boris Jakim and Robert Bird (Hudson, NY: Lindisfarne Books, 1998), p. 368.

have positive value for him; he must decide what is most important for one of his temperaments and talents.⁹

Rosenblatt's commitment to the individual's experience is evident in her romantic phrasing of 'temperaments and talents' and her almost Lawrencian allusion to 'the fullblooded life of the senses and the imagination'. Importantly, the example illustrates Rosenblatt's belief in the complexity of value selection, in that one must often choose between apparently equally positive values. This conundrum requires careful reflection and conversation with others whom one trusts, savouring the emotional situation in which such values are considered.¹⁰ In these phrases, Rosenblatt's language is bordering on the language of wisdom, of making choices and reflecting on matters which may seem equally positive and thus 'right'.

Rosenblatt believes that the process of deliberation is something in which the language arts teacher can play a positive role. The instructor must firstly recognise that most of his students will not go on to become specialists in English, but that they will leave the university and make their way in America's democratic society.¹¹ They must also recognise that the profession of teaching English 'is dedicated to helping individual human beings, from the beginning to adulthood, to enter as fully as possible into the potentialities of language. Our aim is to help them acquire the capacity through language to organize their sense of their worlds, to communicate it to others, and to participate in the experiences and ideas of others'.¹² Through an extended metaphor of the language arts teacher as a medical general practitioner, Rosenblatt reiterates her central commitments: to the individual human being, to his transactional experience of language, to his quest for meaning, and to the furthering of a society

⁹ Rosenblatt, 'Language, Literature, and Values', p. 73.

¹⁰ Rosenblatt's emphasis on trust is part and parcel of her personalistic approach, removing barriers to the free exchange of ideas. See Louise M. Rosenblatt, *Literature as Exploration*, 5th ed. (New York: MLA, 1995), p. 67.

¹¹ Louise M. Rosenblatt, untitled, draft manuscript, p. 7. Papers of Gordon Morrell Pradl, New York. Thanks are due to Gordon Pradl for allowing me access to these private papers.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 8.

in which people try and understand each other and thus co-operate. Rosenblatt talks of being centred ‘on the health of human beings’, which ties in with her emphasis on the difficulty of selecting among positive values as well as sifting the negative from the positive.¹³ Instructors help students to balance emotion with rationality, and to enliven thinking by drawing students back to the emotional colouring of the literary experience.

Rosenblatt is most focused on a vision of quest, however, when she summarises the role of the ‘language education specialist’, who, imbibing the fundamental philosophical understanding of transactional, dynamic being in the world, for learners views ‘speaking, listening, reading, writing as ways of acquiring a sense of their own identity and an understanding of the humanity of other personalities and their worlds’.¹⁴ Repeated use of the word ‘world’ also intimates at the more technical understanding of ‘world’ which later Text World Theory thinkers made (see Chapter 3), in which readers actively enter into and help construct fictional worlds which collide with their existing discourse world – a world made up of various language systems and symbolic forms of communication. This is an expansive view of English studies, and must be seen as the logical end of Rosenblatt’s original transactional position, as I shall further explore in the Conclusion. When the transactional view of language and experience undermines foundational assumptions about what ‘literature’ is, the direction in which literary studies moves deals more fundamentally with helping people develop their sensitivity to language and the ways in which different people use language to articulate their worlds and the values latent in those worlds. Literary studies may also, Rosenblatt argues, develop sensitivity to other ‘personalities’. As I explored in Chapter 3, literary imagination and a palimpsestuous way of handling the literary experience are means by which individuals enter experientially into the lives of others and form degrees of attachment to others.

¹³ Ibid., p. 9.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 11.

In the hands of Rosenblatt's one-time student, Maxine Greene (1917-2014), however, talk of 'acquiring a sense of [students'] own identity and an understanding of the humanity of other personalities and their worlds' takes on a decidedly more explicitly existentialist stance, and 'quest' is used repeatedly to denote the quality of becoming which arts education should be directed towards. Drawing, among other sources, on the existentialist philosopher Mary Warnock's *Imagination* (1978), Greene believes that education is fundamentally designed to eliminate boredom and to help the learner to realise that one has 'not come to the end of what is worth having'.¹⁵ It is from this purpose that being in quest comes into its own.

Greene and the Need to 'Chart the Lived Landscape'

In 2001 Greene and Rosenblatt appeared publicly together at the Great Women Scholars conference in Manhattan, and New York is a city to which both thinkers were immensely attached – a place redolent with possibility, for becoming, for the new.¹⁶ Greene spoke after Rosenblatt and paid tribute to her for being such an inspiration, as a woman and as a thinker.¹⁷ Greene studied at Barnard College in the 1930s while Rosenblatt was working there as an instructor in English, and Greene took Rosenblatt's course on pre-Elizabethan dramatics – Greene's only course in English. 'It was the day of New Criticism', she said, 'and I thought they'd spoil literature for me so I was exempted from taking courses'.¹⁸ Greene went on to become a professor of philosophy at Teachers College and over her long career specialised in

¹⁵ Quoted in Maxine Greene, *Releasing the Imagination: Essays on Education, the Arts, and Social Change* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2000), p. 92. Subsequent references to this text are given in parentheses in the main body.

¹⁶ This is especially evident in Rosenblatt's editorial articles for *The Barnard Bulletin* between 1923 and 1924, but also surfaces in interviews given in the 1980s and 1990s.

¹⁷ Garn Press, 'Great Women Scholars Part Two: Maxine Greene' (August 5, 2015), <http://garnpress.com/2015/great-women-scholars-part-two-maxine-greene/> (accessed online, August 3, 2016).

¹⁸ Ibid. Greene is perhaps anticipating the real heyday of formalism, which was during the 1950s. However, at Barnard the influence of I. A. Richards's *Practical Criticism* (1929) was already felt.

aesthetics and philosophy of education, in how aesthetic experience transforms education, particularly for young people.

The 2001 New York City conference was significant because Greene and Rosenblatt spoke as two elderly people whose work in philosophy had played an intensely personal role in their lives. Conscious of the attacks on the World Trade Center ten days earlier, Greene spoke openly of quest, explaining how it ‘has been deeply personal, that of a woman trying to affirm the feminine, the wife and mother and friend, while reaching, always reaching beyond the limits imposed by the obligation to a woman’s life’.¹⁹ She tried to remain hopeful in the face of darkness.

Greene’s vision of quest heavily impacted her philosophy of education, and her main achievement was to underscore the relationships between imagination, quest, and social change. Greene actively reprises the social vision and transformative potential of the quest for wisdom. As an existentialist, Greene’s core commitment was to becoming, to the possible, to the not-yet: ‘we live our lives and make our choices and, by so doing, we create (and recreate) our selves’.²⁰

Although Greene was much broader in her interests than Rosenblatt, Greene nevertheless published in *College English* on multiple occasions throughout her career.²¹ And yet while coming so close to Rosenblatt’s domain it is puzzling that, to the best of my knowledge, she never once referenced or wrote of Rosenblatt’s work, in spite of her interest in almost identical themes – in how readers personally engage with literature in a quest for meaning. This is partly to do with difference in approach: Rosenblatt’s writing is analytical and responsive to movements specific to her discipline of literary studies; Greene’s, on the other

¹⁹ Garn Press, ‘Great Women Scholars Part Two: Maxine Greene’.

²⁰ Maxine Greene, ‘Language, Literature, and the Release of Meaning’, *College English*, 41 (1979): 123-35, p. 131.

²¹ For example, see Maxine Greene, ‘Aesthetics, Criticism, and the Work of Literary Art’, *College English*, 30 (1968): 60-66.

hand, is more exploratory, cyclical, and reminiscent of some European styles of philosophy, particularly twentieth-century French existentialism. Greene rarely devotes lengthy passages to discussing the theory or philosophy of a thinker; instead she weaves disconnected fragments into her own tapestry of thought; she is the organiser of her sources and they can only be ‘explained’ by reference to Maxine the person – to her organisation of her experiences. In this sense she is personalistic. Berdyaev’s existential insight encapsulates Greene’s approach: ‘It is the concrete person, not the epistemological subject or the abstract universal mind, who takes cognisance of and meditates on the object of knowledge, philosophical or otherwise’.²²

Such a ‘concrete’ approach is especially evident in Greene’s landmark book of essays, *Releasing the Imagination: Essays on Education, the Arts, and Social Change* (1995). In a 1979 essay for *College English* Greene wrote of her concern about ‘encounters with imaginative literature as they advance the search for meaning that goes on throughout life’, and this theme is fully explored in *Releasing the Imagination*, by combining personal reflections with literary criticism and philosophical speculation.²³ Like Rosenblatt, Greene also saw her students as individuals in quest, yet said so much more explicitly (14). As learners in institutions of education, students are to be seen ‘as distinctive, *questioning* persons – persons in the process of defining themselves’ (13, my emphasis). As ‘questioning’ persons, learning must proceed ‘from the vantage point of her or his lived situation, that is, in accord with a distinctive point of view and interest’ (31). The trouble is that learners, and young learners in particular, may often feel inhibited from realising their quests and launching off on a journey of exploration, just as they may be reluctant to divulge personal responses to literature. Teachers and those in authority have to help students to overcome their silences, and to forge lines of consistency across the different stages of education (25). Greene speaks of seeking ‘shocks of awareness’ and

²² Nicolas Berdyaev, *Dream and Reality: An Essay in Autobiography*, trans. Katharine Lampert (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1950), p. 104.

²³ Greene, ‘Language, Literature, and the Release of Meaning’, p. 133.

initiations into ‘uneasy participation in the human community’s unending quest’ (151). Imagination, so precious to Greene, is the key by which people can, in an echo of Dewey, break through the ‘inertia of habit’ (21).

New possibilities can emerge if a breakthrough occurs – when ‘a person chooses to view herself or himself in the midst of things, as beginner or learner or explorer, and has the imagination to envisage new things emerging, more and more begins to seem possible’ (22). Greene colours this perspective by quoting Emily Dickinson’s poem: ‘The Possible’s slow fuse is lit / By the Imagination’. For Greene, the possible’s slow fuse is lit especially by a form of imagination which brings the human person into communion with others, which can help him to join others in their quests. ‘Imagination may be a new way of decentering ourselves’, she writes, ‘of breaking out of the confinements of privatism and self-regard into a space where we can come face to face with others and call out, “Here we are”’ (31).

Like Rosenblatt, Greene also sees imaginative participation in the experiences of others, especially in the aesthetic experience, as a way of both enhancing one’s own life by possibly gaining in self-knowledge, and also of making the lives of others more tolerable through empathic resonance, of simply being able to communicate, ‘Here we are’, and then being heard. Greene parallels my discussion of literary imagination in Chapter 3 and enlarges it into a broader concern with what it means to be in quest in an educational institution. The quests undertaken by learners eventually bring them out of their own activity to appear ‘before others, speaking their own voices, and trying as they do to bring into being a common world’ (68). In this sentiment we find an echo of Rosenblatt’s appropriation of the *literatus* and H.D.’s vision of the scribe (see Chapter 3), as someone who actively seeks to engage with the experiences of others, to find some way of articulating threads of commonality that might be the basis for the possible. This by no means diminishes the emphasis on the personalistic way of knowing

operational in the literary experience; it in fact enhances emphasis on the individual by encouraging others to appreciate the personality and experiences of others.

Moreover, for Greene, the implication of foregrounding an individual's experiential vantage point at any given time is that he or she should be permitted to cultivate their own 'language' for communicating their quest. Some people may

find articulation through imagery; others, through body movement; still others, through musical sound. Mastery of a range of languages is necessary if communication is to take place beyond small enclosures within the culture; without multiple languages, it is extremely difficult to chart the lived landscape, thematizing experience over time. (57-58)

This assertion is typical of Greene's interdisciplinary, multi-modal approach which pervaded her entire career, always encouraging different art forms to communicate with each other. Although Greene tends to focus on children's experiences of the arts, her vision can easily be applied to adults in various learning contexts, whether at university-level for the awarding of degrees, or in adult continuing education.

In fact, one of Greene's colleagues, Jack Mezirow, partially built on Greene's existential emphasis on people's quest for meaning – the desire to 'thematize experience over time' – within the specific context of adult learning. Mezirow, also New York-based, began from the need to reach out to the possible, to see oneself as always becoming, and developed this idea into a substantial theory of transformative learning. Where transformation is implicit, even aestheticised, in Greene's work, it becomes explicit and matter-of-fact in Mezirow's, and subsequent transformative learning theorists have nuanced Mezirow's own work. Their ideas provide some further themes and terms which I find applicable to conceiving Rosenblatt's transactional approach in terms of a quest for wisdom.

Mezirow and Transformative Learning

By the mid-1970s, Greene's existential approach to aesthetic education was having an impact elsewhere at Teachers College, and Jack Mezirow (1923-2014) was beginning to formulate his hugely influential philosophy of 'transformative learning' for adult learners, at the heart of which is a 'perspective transformation' that leads to increased personal and social change.²⁴ Mezirow began to think about transformative learning for adults in the context of women's re-entry programmes in the United States, and so from the very beginning his theory was distinctive for its feminine and feminist rationale.²⁵ In 2000 Mezirow defined transformative learning as

the process by which we transform our taken-for-granted frames of reference (meaning perspectives, habits of mind, mind-sets) to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, emotionally capable of change, and reflective so that they may generate beliefs and opinions that will prove more true or justified to guide action.²⁶

With regard to women's re-entry programmes, Mezirow was fascinated by the way in which women were encouraged by the programme to question taken-for-granted perspectives about their nature and role in private and public life, and ultimately, to take control of their lives in a more vital way. His philosophy was grounded in humanistic faith in the potential of the individual to self-actualise, in the Maslovian sense, or to individuate, in the Jungian sense –

²⁴ Peter Willis, 'An Existential Approach to Transformative Learning' in *Handbook of Transformative Learning*, ed. Edward W. Taylor and Patricia Cranton (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2012), pp. 212-27, p. 214; p. 222.

²⁵ Lisa M. Baumgartner, 'Mezirow's Theory of Transformative Learning from 1975 to the Present' in *Handbook of Transformative Learning*, pp. 99-115, p. 105.

²⁶ Jack Mezirow, 'Learning to Think Like an Adult: Core Concepts of Transformation Theory' in *Handbook of Transformative Learning*, pp. 73-95, p. 76.

ideas which essentially dignify the person with the ability and right to grow to their full potential.²⁷

Judging by Rosenblatt's references in the various editions of *Literature as Exploration*, it is clear that Mezirow and Rosenblatt were influenced by similar theorists regarding human development.²⁸ Rosenblatt cites Carl Rogers's seminal text, *On Becoming a Person* (1961), Jerome Bruner's *On Knowing* (1962), and Gordon Allport's *Pattern and Growth in Personality* (1961).²⁹ These humanistic theorists influenced Rosenblatt organically rather than systematically, and are evident in her emphasis on the uniqueness of the individual, resistance to strict psychoanalytic and also behaviourist explanations of human behaviour, and finally, on the constructive nature of personality. Mezirow follows his sources of inspiration more closely, however, in his explicit concern with the process of personal change and growth.

Mezirow's approach was also inspired by the work of the Frankfurt cultural theorists, who, when combined in his thought, injected a strain of cultural critique into the process of perspective transformation, in coming to question hegemonic ideologies and the ways in which what seems 'normal' may in fact be oppressive for human flourishing.³⁰ It is interesting to note, and perhaps instructive, that Rosenblatt was also insistent on the need to critique dominant values in society, but repeatedly emphasised caution and in the 1990s critiqued 'cultural theorists' – some of whom were influenced by the Frankfurt theorists – for inadvertently

²⁷ Patricia Cranton and Edward W. Taylor, 'Transformative Learning Theory: Seeking a More Unified Theory' in *Handbook of Transformative Learning*, pp. 3-20, p. 6.

²⁸ In her 1999 interview at Miami, Rosenblatt also invokes Maslow's hierarchy of needs in order to justify her political activity in ensuring children have various needs met before they can read meaningfully. Eugene F. Provenzo Jr., 'Louise Rosenblatt Interview', School of Education, University of Miami. 14 March 1999. <http://www.education.miami.edu/ep/rosenblatt/> (accessed online, June 17 2015).

²⁹ However, Rosenblatt criticised the way in which the Project English programmes of the 1960s applied Bruner's 'spiral curriculum', because they failed to moderate the inherently analytic nature of the spiral approach, drawn as it was from methods in mathematics and science. See Louise M. Rosenblatt, 'Pattern and Process – A Polemic', *The English Journal*, 58 (1969): 1005-1012, p. 1006.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 7. Critical theory's importance for transformational learning has been explored by Stephen D. Brookfield. See 'Critical Theory and Transformational Learning' in *Handbook of Transformative Learning*, pp. 131-46.

communicating the idea that all of Western culture was negative.³¹ Again, the emphasis should be on selectivity, and even selecting among positive values encountered in literature.

Since Mezirow's seminal text in the field, *Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning* (1991), subsequent theorists of transformative learning have sought to enrich the vision by thinking about 'soul work' and an existential 'appreciative life stance'.³² The goal in these newer approaches is to question the power and role of rationality in effecting a perspective transformation. For Dirkx, spirituality and ideas of the soul and unconscious processes are just as important as intellectual, conceptual shifts, and for Willis, essential changes need not have to occur primarily in knowledge, but rather, in a transformed 'appreciative life stance' – a quality of being newly interested and affectively moved by the world. These newer contributions are also supposed to emphasise the social aspect of transformative learning; as Cranton and Taylor observe, transformative learning is about 'individuals moving toward a better understanding of the self by engaging with others' and with their lives and preoccupations.³³ For Mezirow, especially in his later work, the appreciation of the 'affective quality and poetry of human experience', in oneself and in others, is founded upon interpersonal aesthetic experiences – a clear link to Greene's position which weaves the arts and personal and social quest together. In Mezirow's words: 'Art, music, and dance are alternative languages. Intuition, imagination, and dreams are other ways of making meaning. Inspiration, empathy, and transcendence are central to self-knowledge and to drawing attention to the affective quality and poetry of human experience'.³⁴ As for Greene, so for Mezirow: 'making meaning' is the central quality of quest, but for Mezirow, this is tied to a specific and tangible transformation,

³¹ See Gordon M. Pradl, *Literature for Democracy: Reading as a Social Act* (Portsmouth, NH: Boynton / Cook, 1996), pp. 85-87.

³² See John M. Dirkx, 'Nurturing Soul Work: A Jungian Approach to Transformative Learning' in *Handbook of Transformative Learning*, pp. 116-30, and Willis, 'An Existential Approach' in *Handbook of Transformative Learning*.

³³ Cranton and Taylor, 'Seeking a More Unified Theory', p. 8.

³⁴ Mezirow, 'Learning to Think Like an Adult', p. 75.

whether this is in conceptual insight, or in terms of transmuting habits of being, a greater receptiveness to the ‘poetry of human experience’, or a deepening dialogic relation between self and other. Finally, this process can be ‘epochal’ and triggered by a profound state of unsettlement or it can be more ‘incremental’ and gradual.³⁵

In the context of literary studies, the distinction between epochal and incremental change is not too important; what seems fruitful is to incorporate the fundamental sentiments and commitments of transformative learning and its care for adults in education. The great merit of transformative learning theory is its increasing commitment to spiritual and affective accounts of perspective transformation and broader personal and social change. Rosenblatt’s emphasis on the importance of helping individuals to choose among values by which to live and make meaning in their lives can be transmuted into a more flexible, perhaps more open-ended project in transformative learning, whereby an ‘appreciative life stance’ connotes a more obviously affective, existential reconfiguration of general orientation to the world.

The existential quality of transformative learning is therefore most apparent in its emphasis on shifts and changes in consciousness, especially when this is directed by a Frankfurt-inspired sensitivity to dominant discourses and resistance to engrained patterns of thinking and behaving. Greene and Mezirow draw out the need to see any shift in values as part of a more holistic, existential quest for meaning, for ‘thematizing experience over time’. They remind us that personal and social change is a complex process, yet also affirm the power of the arts more generally in aiding the process of becoming.

What troubles me about Greene’s and Mezirow’s humanistic approach, however, is their tendency to subscribe too uncritically to humanistic theories of personality, which only see a positive trajectory. Greene’s existentialism seems to be devoid of emphasising some of the

³⁵ Ibid, p. 86. See also Elizabeth J. Tisdell, ‘Themes and Variations of Transformative Learning: Interdisciplinary Perspectives that Transform’ in *Handbook of Transformative Learning*, pp. 21-36, p. 31.

apparent contradictions, tensions, and insoluble paradoxes which sometimes characterise human experience, not to mention the problem of evil with which philosophers such as Hannah Arendt and Berdyaev grappled, albeit from different religious standpoints. A personalist framework, as opposed to a humanist one, would perhaps be more willing to impose limits on programmes of learning and models of psychology which seem unduly optimistic about capacity for ‘progress’ or ‘development’. More humane and realistic would seem to be a philosophy which welcomes into the forefront of consciousness and critical debate the difficulties and challenges of life, and the evil which human experience, both past and present, knows to be present as a pain-inducing, debilitating reality, often disguised as a ‘good’. The transactional literary experience seems supremely able to allow learners the spaces in which to enter aesthetically vivified explorations of ethics (see below), where ‘good’ and ‘evil’ can be discussed not only as abstract concepts, but as experiences which happen to concrete human beings.

It will be helpful now to turn to H.D., and to give an overview of how quest was imbricated in her various artistic and intellectual endeavours. H.D. in many ways embodies but also personalises discussion on quest. As Rosenblatt herself intuited, sometimes the best way of communicating the quality of being in quest and its affective pull is to root it in concrete example, as she did with Joyce’s Stephen Dedalus. H.D. also supports Greene’s and Mezirow’s notion about different languages assisting in the individual’s quest for meaning.

H.D. in Quest

It would not be an exaggeration to say that H.D.’s entire career was concerned with quest. Her disappointment with Ezra Pound in 1908 (when he left America for Europe, and effectively dissolved their engagement) and her subsequent emigration to England in 1911 encouraged H.D. to think of her art as a form of self-recuperation. As Janice S. Robinson explains, H.D.’s

early poetry in London became a way of processing what had happened to her: 'she became an artist and created a world of her own – a world in which her mind was in control of her experience'.³⁶ The breakup of her marriage to Richard Aldington in the 1910s, along with the stillbirth of her baby in 1915 and the break with D. H. Lawrence in November 1917, formed the personal matrix that resulted in decades of quest to understand what had happened to her in such a short space of time, and to create a new identity.

The events of the 1910s were endlessly recycled in her autobiographical prose of the 1920s. Of course, these personal events were interconnected with the First World War, and H.D.'s work after 1918 bears the broader modernist hallmark of questing after a new world in the wake of cosmic destruction, a reaching forth toward a conciliatory settlement. As Susan Stanford Friedman has said, 'the war embodied the violent decay of the old order; its meaninglessness challenged Western belief in the superiority of its religions, institutions, sciences, and technologies'.³⁷ This disintegration inspired 'a literature centred on quest, art whose new forms and themes were consistent with the search for new patterns of meaning'.³⁸ H.D. gathered the fragments of her own psyche in part by gathering fragments from lost religious thought. In 1916 Berdyaev was writing about the need for Europeans to rediscover a deeper, more cosmic basis to life than the worldviews and attitudes of the nineteenth century: 'a deeper consciousness is possible only upon a religious basis', he wrote; 'the world catastrophe ought to enable a religious deepening of life'.³⁹ In her writing after 1918, H.D. became increasingly interested in the intersections between different, unorthodox discourses, in particular the psychoanalytic and the occult, and these were harnessed in H.D.'s ongoing

³⁶ Janice S. Robinson, *H.D.: The Life and Work of an American Poet* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1982), p. 59.

³⁷ Susan Stanford Friedman, *Psyche Reborn: The Emergence of H.D.* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1981), p. 3.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ Nikolai Berdyaev, 'The Cosmic and the Sociological World-Sense' (1916), trans. Stephen S. Janos (2002), http://www.berdyaev.com/berdiaev/berd_lib/1916_235.html (accessed online, August 1, 2016).

quest, which gradually began to chime with Berdyaev's focus on the religious or spiritual as a touchstone for creating new life after the war.⁴⁰

I will return to various historical moments in which H.D. was developing her quest, but it is important to sense the potential universality of H.D.'s quest – that which can inspire quests today, in different cultural and historical moments. This will be done partly by alluding to the philosophical dimension of H.D.'s quest, and by evaluating the ways in which she handled various discourses. This involves a focus on her methodology, which, as in the previous chapters, enables cross-referencing to Rosenblatt and others.

Jolted Out of the Mundane

Foremost among H.D.'s early post-war pieces of writing is her 1919 essay, *Notes on Thought and Vision*, which was written on the Scilly Isles. H.D. had retreated to a cottage with her companion, Bryher, and the goal was to recover from the trauma of giving birth to Perdita earlier in the year and her battle with the 1918 Influenza Pandemic at the same time.⁴¹ *Notes on Thought and Vision* is uncharacteristically straightforward in prose style for H.D.; the later meditations on consciousness, such as *Majic Ring*, are far more elliptical and intricate. Her central goal in this essay, however, is to articulate a mode of consciousness which can create new visions. She calls this the 'over-mind', and it essentially involves the brain connecting with the lower 'love regions', or the womb (if you are a woman). Independently each centre carries on its own being in the world, but the over-mind is superior because it somehow joins the two. H.D.'s concept of the over-mind seems to gesture at a level of consciousness beyond the intellect, and yet which is more substantial than intuition.

⁴⁰ The relationship between psychoanalysis and the occult in H.D.'s work is the main subject of Friedman's *Psyche Reborn*. See also Elizabeth Anderson, *H.D. and Modernist Religious Imagination: Mysticism and Writing* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013).

⁴¹ See Barbara Guest, *Herself Defined: The Poet H.D. and Her World* (London: Collins, 1985), pp. 118-20.

H.D. insists that the over-mind is arrived at through an intensely felt experience: 'The swing from normal consciousness to abnormal consciousness is accompanied by grinding discomfort of mental agony'.⁴² There is a latent existential quality to *Notes on Thought and Vision*, and H.D. references this early text in her much later writing on her experiences with the existential psychoanalyst, Erich Heydt, in the 1950s. The over-mind is so important to H.D. because it is a means of coming out of, sometimes in agony, mundane routine and a limited vision of the world. It is reminiscent of Heidegger's concept of 'thrownness', of coming to consciousness of being somehow in the midst of free existence, which is at the same time orchestrated by the self who is thrower as well as thrown.

One must be careful therefore not to 'bury one's talent carefully in a napkin' and thus avoid what can only be described as a form of awakening (17). H.D. writes that

our minds, all of our minds, are like dull little houses, built more or less alike – a dull little city with rows of little detached villas [...] Each comfortable little home shelters a comfortable little soul – and a wall at the back shuts out completely any communication with the world beyond. Man's chief concern is keeping his little house warm and making his little wall strong. (40-41)

As with Greene, the great challenge is to jolt or 'throw' oneself into quest: to become aware of the limiting way of living when one's 'chief concern is keeping his little house warm and making his little wall strong'.⁴³ This is an uncomfortable experience, but H.D. presents art as a means of being jolted into the over-mind and onto the path of seeing the world in a new way; the over-mind turns human consciousness into a 'receiving centre for dots and dashes', which

⁴² H.D., *Notes on Thought and Vision* (London: Peter Owen, 1988), p. 19. Subsequent references to this text are given in parentheses in the main body.

⁴³ On the perceived uniformity of suburbia, see a later criticism by Lewis Mumford, *The City in History: Its Origins, Its Transformations, and Its Prospects* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1961), p. 486.

could potentially ‘direct lightning, flashes of electric power to slash across and destroy the world of dead murky thought’ (27). The mention of a ‘wall’ that divides modes of consciousness also foreshadows H.D.’s explorations in World War Two into the brain’s ‘blue-light consciousness’, to which she gave the metaphor of a spliced room, or the removal of a dividing wall, which is in line with contemporary neuroscientific research regarding the workings of dreams, in which a partition in the brain effectively dissolves.⁴⁴ Ultimately, although it is true that H.D. (like other modernists) detested suburbia – she was either a city-centre dweller or a remote country person – the metaphor of the middle-class suburban house (‘villa’) is simply an indication of the ubiquity of being closed off to higher forms of vision.⁴⁵

H.D.’s language therefore deliberately focuses on aspects of Western civilisation which the war has helped to expose as decayed; it has effectively ‘slashed’ and ‘destroyed’ all that was ‘murky’ and suffocating before. In this sense H.D. is suggesting that there is a certain kind of suffering that is beneficial, and the war has helped her to grasp this in a very personal way. ‘To accept life’, wrote H.D., ‘is dangerous’, yet ‘it is also dangerous not to accept life’ (39). In the recurring symbol of the serpent with the thistle, H.D. sees the path to life (the thistle) through the biting experiences of death (the serpent).⁴⁶ The war has questioned all former ways of thinking and living – all former values – and H.D. now believes that it is positively dangerous to try and avoid suffering and the new lease of life it may bring in its wake.

From 1919 onwards, H.D.’s sense of quest was founded upon the necessity to be jolted out of deadening patterns of thinking and living, toward the possibility of the new, transacting

⁴⁴ See H.D., *Within the Walls and What do I Love*, ed. Annette Debo (Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 2014), p. 120.

⁴⁵ On modernists and the masses, see John Carey’s controversial *The Intellectuals and the Masses: Pride and Prejudice Among the Literary Intelligentsia, 1880-1939* (London: Faber and Faber, 1992). D. H. Lawrence’s poetry can also be antagonistic towards suburbia.

⁴⁶ For an analysis of this symbol, see Nephie J. Christodoulides, ‘Introduction’ in H.D., *Magic Mirror, Compassionate Friendship, Thorn Thicket: A Tribute to Erich Heydt*, ed. Nephie J. Christodoulides (Victoria, BC: ELS Editions, 2012), pp. xxiii-xxxvii, p. xxxvi.

with art in the process. ‘Dots and dashes’, like Rosenblatt’s textual symbols, are transformed in the right consciousness of men and women who have brought their intellects into dialogue with their love regions – an affective transition aimed at discovering new vistas. Mingled in this position of H.D.’s is a mixture of (an at-present) unconscious existentialist commitment to authenticity or the rejection of prescribed ways of living, and a romantic allegiance to individual subjective experience and alternative identities, particularly for women.⁴⁷

Digging Down to Re-affirm

By 1933, when she began psychoanalysis with Sigmund Freud in Vienna, H.D. felt she needed to be jolted out of a state of malaise and drifting. Her analysis with Freud is explored in her memoir, *Tribute to Freud*, part of which she wrote during her creative renaissance in the Second World War:

We had come together to substantiate something. I did not know what. There was something that was beating in my brain; I do not say my heart – my brain. I wanted it to be let out. I wanted to free myself of repetitive thoughts and experiences [...] You might say that I had – yes, I had something that I specifically owned. I *owned* myself. I did not really, of course. My family, my friends, and my circumstances owned me.⁴⁸

H.D.’s focus is on consciousness, with ways of thinking and seeing the world – with her ‘brain’ – and it is in this arena that she struggles for mastery over the subtle influences of family,

⁴⁷ See Cassandra Laity, *H.D. and the Victorian Fin de Siècle: Gender, Modernism, Decadence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) for an analysis of H.D.’s recuperation of romantic tropes to counter the male modernist thrust represented especially by Pound. On existentialist authenticity (in Heidegger), see Warnock, *Existentialist Ethics*, pp. 14-15.

⁴⁸ H.D., *Tribute to Freud* (New York: New Directions, 2012), p. 13, original emphasis. Subsequent references to this text are given in parentheses in the main body.

friends, and circumstances. In this sense H.D. is reaching toward the kind of independence and choosing activity that Rosenblatt tried to instil in her students and in which Mezirow framed his women's re-entry programmes. H.D.'s learning framework, however, is carried out in the paradigm of psychoanalysis rather than the literature classroom; although as we have seen, an emphasis on the existential quality of transformative learning opens up rather than closes down conversations between these different domains of transformation.

H.D. consulted with Freud because she believed he could help her to disentangle herself, something which she hoped would unblock her and help her to resume her quest, to become Psyche reborn. Of course, the paradox is that the analysis itself was part of the overarching quest, which suggests that there are always different layers of quest and that it is a dynamic thing. H.D. sought to deepen the level of quest: 'I wanted to dig down and dig out, root out my personal weeds, strengthen my purpose, reaffirm my beliefs, canalize my energies' (91). For H.D. this was a very active process. She and Freud referred to their work together as 'researches, our "studies"' (93). Echoing her earlier theory sketched out in *Notes on Thought and Vision*, H.D. came to see her work with Freud as something much more encompassing than a strict psychoanalytic transaction, and this is part of her more general revisionist activity, making Freud's theories work for her, rather than allowing herself to be bent towards Freud's theories.⁴⁹

Between them, H.D. and Freud explored her dreams and experiences in a manner which H.D. believed was aesthetic, using a sort of over-mind consciousness to receive the 'dots and dashes' of her dream material and Freud's associative thinking. According to H.D., a memory of a 'fragment of a dream-picture is actual, is real, is like a work of art or is a work of art' (29). The fragmentary and the scattered are brought together under a particular kind of consciousness, which, 'apparently unrelated, were often found to be part of a special layer or stratum of thought

⁴⁹ It is possible that Freud in fact questioned some of his own theories, especially about women, during and after his work with H.D. See Robinson, *H.D.*, pp. 278-81.

and memory, therefore to belong together' (14). Moreover, dreams can 'be as varied as the books we read, the pictures we look at, or the people we meet' (35). H.D. is framing her active research with Freud as a practical attempt to find meaning in the infinitely varied reading material we encounter in our lives.

Reminiscent of the much later linguistic turn, with Freud's help H.D. came to see reading as an activity fundamental to our day-to-day existence, whether we pick up a book or not. As in *The Sword Went Out to Sea* and *Within the Walls*, aesthetic experience can happen with any kind of material – a position explored by Proust, for instance, in his famous tea and madeleines experience in *Swann's Way* (1913). The key is to adopt the correct stance – a process that will help the person to move out of denuding consciousness to something more wide awake. And so H.D. brought notebooks and old manuscripts with her to Vienna, and in her hotel room would often prepare, against Freud's wishes, for her early evening 'hour'.

Indeed, the 'hour' took on an almost mystical significance, recalling a religious meditation or invocation – something that was reprised much later in *Hermetic Definition* (1961). In preparation for this hour (5-6 PM, six days a week), H.D. described how 'sorting books, manuscripts, note-books, I felt as if I were indeed making ready for a last voyage out' (154). Is the 'last' supposed to represent the last time H.D. would ever make an intellectual quest or voyage, or is it in fact an indication of a final preparatory stage, which once completed would then enable her to 'cruise' at her own pace, and at her own depth (153)? H.D.'s hours with Freud conducting their research enabled her to move on from the period of drifting which predated this, as well as equipping her with a discourse with which to frame her subsequent quest. She was able to dig down into her psyche and in doing so, was encouraged to re-affirm and possibly revise what mattered to her.

Languages for Thematising Experience Over Time

After H.D. finished her consultations with Freud, she supplemented the insights of psychoanalysis with discourses and practices drawn from the occult: astrology, numerology, Tarot, and spiritualism (later the Kabbalah also became significant). These acted as multiple languages for helping her to thematise experience over time. Such ventures in the 1940s into non-traditional forms of spiritual experience aimed to help H.D. understand her role in a time of extreme stress and conflict. She assimilated them into her own thinking and creatively adapted them for her artistic ends. In a sense, she personalised these discourses into a personalist quest.

Whereas the First World War startled her and rendered her mostly passive for its duration, the Second World War ignited perhaps the most consistently creative period of H.D.'s life, of which she was, for the most part, fully in control. As Friedman writes: 'on the deepest level, the destruction of war made acute her need to find meaning embedded in the harsh realities of a nightmarish existence'.⁵⁰ And yet H.D.'s war experiences of the 1940s must not be considered exceptional, for

the underlying motivations for the expansion of H.D.'s esoteric search from the Tarot of the twenties to the invocations of the fifties were the same cluster of reasons that brought her to Freud: the search for a direction in a 'drifting' century; the need to fortify herself for the impending war; the quest to avoid the destruction wrought by 'racial separateness' by linking the personal dream with the myths of everyone, everywhere; the desire to explore and confirm beliefs; and the hope that

⁵⁰ Friedman, *Psyche Reborn*, p. 170.

such knowledge would ‘canalize’ her energies into the visionary experiences of her art.⁵¹

Although in this thesis I have focused particularly on H.D.’s writing from the period of the Second World War, this cluster of prose pieces and poetry must be seen as a particularly clear crystallisation of tendencies that had been in motion many years before, and would be further explored once the war finished.

The Second World War isolated H.D. and frequently kept her cooped up with Bryher in their Lowndes Square flat.⁵² During this time, H.D. dug deeply into her inner world at the same time as being receptive to spiritual influences in the wider world: from the racial separatism of the Nazis to the broader day-to-day experiences of people losing their homes, suffering injury, and who were constantly at risk of or actually experiencing bereavement, as in her poems, ‘May 1943’ and ‘Christmas 1944’. In the post-war trilogy of historical romances – *White Rose and the Red*, *The Sword Went Out to Sea*, and *The Mystery* – H.D. worked at trying to communicate how she understood the value of the war and suffering for her ongoing quest. Dowding and her Eurasian medium, Arthur Bhaduri, helped her in her spiritualist work, receiving messages from dead airmen, while reflection on her own childhood roots and ancestral mystical influences helped her to move beyond human differences to a focus on what people share. Meanwhile, drawing astrological natal charts for herself and her friends and family assisted H.D. in expressing her commitment to a web of personal relations, past and present, reflected in the motions and influences of planets upon one another.⁵³

By the 1950s, the various different discourses – psychoanalysis, astrology, occultism, spiritualism, and others – were seamlessly interwoven. In fact, rather than so many separate languages, these knowledge discourses became one single tapestry into which H.D. wove her

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 176.

⁵² Guest, *Herself Defined*, p. 253.

⁵³ Friedman, *Psyche Reborn*, p. 166.

life. It is the personalist way in which H.D. handled these languages which makes her example so potent for considering the quest for wisdom. These languages emphasise the creative, literary dimension of her quest. H.D.'s next and final stage of research work with Erich Heydt in Switzerland therefore took on a different colouring to her work with Freud, some twenty years earlier. She was more independent, more self-aware of her abilities, and she was able to draw upon multiple languages for thematising experience over time. Her approach became more consciously existential, and thus more personal.

Encounters with Existentialism

From 1946 until just before her death, in 1961, H.D. lived almost entirely in Switzerland, firstly alternating between hotels in Lausanne and Lugano, and then as a resident in a nursing home in Küsnacht, near Zurich. It was at Küsnacht that she met the existential psychoanalyst Erich Heydt. In the mid-late-1950s H.D. wrote a series of memoirs and a *roman à clef* about her work with Heydt, on whom she even developed a romantic attachment.⁵⁴

Heydt departed from the strict Freudian method by adopting an existential approach drawn from Heidegger. Existential psychoanalysis diverged from the Freudian method by its rejection of a strictly empirical, biological, and diagnostic approach to the human psyche. For example, Ludwig Binswanger – another Swiss existential analyst – also drew on Heidegger's work in order to develop an approach to analysis which tried to understand the existential dynamics of the patient, and to be interested in the manifest content of dreams as pertaining to reconfigurations of unconscious imagery valuable in themselves.⁵⁵ Moreover, the living arrangements at H.D.'s nursing homes were highly suited to an existential approach, allowing the analyst to take an anthropological interest in the individuals living there full-time. They

⁵⁴ Christodoulides, 'Introduction', pp. xxxiii-xxxiv.

⁵⁵ See the chapter on Binswanger in Martin Halliwell, *Romantic Science and the Experience of Self* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), pp. 110-55.

meant that H.D.'s 'hours' with Heydt took on the character of afternoon tea: as much a general chit-chat as a doctor-patient consultation.

H.D.'s memoir, *Compassionate Friendship*, explores how Heydt's existentialism affected her relations with him and the development of her own thought. From her notebooks we know that H.D. read Sartre's *Being and Nothingness* (1943), and wrote: 'Certain fact, man exists, life is lived and especially "when life is lived in some special & revealing way which is different from mere existence"'.⁵⁶ This special and revealing way of living seems to be connected to a realisation of the 'uniqueness' of the individual, and possibly his 'loneliness' also – something which would have chimed with H.D.'s existing romantic inclinations (215).

H.D.'s experiences with Heydt not only helped her to go deeper into her past, but they also helped her to live perhaps the most intensely thus far in her life. Devouring the novelist Ellen Glasgow's autobiography, *The Woman Within* (1954), H.D. affirmed that 'our lives begin, some of them, when we are 60' (86). Although Glasgow's biography is of a different genre to Sartre's text, the point is that H.D. was consciously imbibing an existentialist outlook on life, focusing on individuals' choices and capacity for freedom. Heydt often told H.D. when her writing was 'existentialist', and this is most apparent in her memoir of Ezra Pound – *End to Torment* – written in 1958. However, H.D.'s language in this text is often ambiguous; we are never sure whether she agrees with this appellation. It is better to speak of H.D.'s encounters with (French) existentialism; she never bought into Sartre's philosophy wholesale, yet in the broader meaning of the term which this thesis has conveyed throughout, H.D.'s work, especially from the 1920s, is undoubtedly sympathetic to existentialism.

So although H.D. 'had finally succeeded, within the limits of human understanding, to get her story written', life at Küsnacht represented yet another unfolding in what became the H.D. Legend. As she wrote to Norman Holmes Pearson in 1951, in particular about *Sword*, 'as

⁵⁶ H.D., *Magic Mirror*, p. 215. Subsequent references to this text are given in parentheses in the main body.

a record and a record I could not have done, if I had not persisted, even at Küsnacht, on REMEMBERING. For me, it was so important, my own LEGEND. Then, to get well and re-create it'.⁵⁷ By the early 1950s H.D.'s conception of her quest as the development of her Legend was tinted with, if not exactly saturated by, Heydt's existentialism, a philosophy which traditionally sees human identity as something fluid, without prior determination, and with an onus laid upon the human person to reach forward and 're-create'. In *Magic Mirror* (written 1955-56) she muses on the word 'existentialism': 'Exist – she couldn't say the word. Why must she think of it? She would work it out sometime – tential – existential. Did her life depend on it? It almost seemed so' (9, original emphasis). In this little passage H.D. discloses the struggle that accompanies the realisation that life should not be lived merely as existence – as getting by – but rather, out of the anguish of responsibility for one's own being, to reckon with the dependence on this truth for human fulfilment; it is a 'tent' in which one moves and has one's being.

The two texts that have been published together with *Magic Mirror* take the form of a journal meditation, emphasising the intimate and imminent nature of H.D.'s reflections on her quest. She writes that 'my days seem lost when I cannot find time for a short note' (132), and 'I wonder why I go on with these notes. Yes – I learn, as I progress' (146). Under Heydt's guidance and encouragement, at Küsnacht in the 1950s H.D. demonstrates her profound commitment to self-development. H.D.'s philosophical musings are very personal and help her to live life on a plane beyond mere existence. Freud had helped H.D. to understand the symbolic nature and potential of human life, and by the 1950s this aesthetic, spiritual, and esoteric way of being in the world had become a daily source of comfort to her, finding its way into her daily notes.

⁵⁷ Donna K. Hollenberg (ed.), *Between History and Poetry: The Letters of H.D. and Norman Holmes Pearson* (Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Press, 1997), pp. 104-105.

In the late 1950s H.D. was also preparing her *roman à clef*, ‘Madrigal’, or *Bid Me to Live*, for publication. H.D. had been working on this text in some form or other since 1921, a couple of years after she wrote *Notes on Thought and Vision*, and indeed, it represents the terminus of her ‘Madrigal cycle’ of autobiographical prose works, which includes *Paint It Today* (written 1921).⁵⁸ *Notes on Thought and Vision* and *Bid Me to Live* and its contemporary texts effectively bookend H.D.’s interest in consciousness. In 1919 she wrote of the need to move beyond the mundane and all that dulls our perception of the world and other people. In 1960, when she wrote *Thorn Thicket*, she also invoked the symbol of the thistle and the serpent and the potential value of suffering in helping the person move into a new lease of life. In *Bid Me to Live*, H.D. emerges as a self-proclaimed ‘wise-woman. She was seer, see-er. She was as at home in this land of subtle psychic reverberations, as she was at home in a book’.⁵⁹ The H.D. character, Julia, is wide awake to the cosmic and spiritual depths of her surroundings in rural Cornwall, 1918: ‘She felt that every casual stone was laid there, for a reason [...] here, in this walled-in-space, was a world; the world, the whole world was given in her consciousness, she was see-er, “priestess,” as Rico [D. H. Lawrence] called her, wise-woman with her witch-ball, the world’ (147). In 1944, in *The Walls Do Not Fall*, H.D. had envisioned the role of the poet in healing a broken society – a complementary role to Rosenblatt’s *literatus* (see Chapter 3). By the late 1950s, however, the immediacy of the war-context subsided and H.D. condensed or distilled the various vocations she felt herself gifted to exercise. Her quest for self-knowledge, for healing, and for the existential possible, was grounded in a heterodox brew of discourses and symbolic frames of reference which simultaneously directed her attention beyond herself, to other people and to other dimensions of existence. And, central to this process – this learning process, as she writes in *Compassionate Friendship* – is a vision of literary experience – of

⁵⁸ Robinson, *H.D.*, p. 119.

⁵⁹ H.D., *Bid Me to Live* (London: Virago, 1984), p. 146. Subsequent references to this text are given in parentheses in the main body.

sensing the ‘reverberations’ when ‘at home in a book’, as much as outside when transacting with the symbolic forms surfacing in her heightened consciousness.

It is not necessary to understand the intricacy of her philosophical and theosophical sources to gain a sense of the contours of H.D.’s quest and how she articulates quest in her work.⁶⁰ For H.D., quest was a very practical process, one which she refracted through different lenses throughout her working life, but which nevertheless retains a line of consistency throughout. It is true that the two world wars were extremely important in shaping her quest, but the interwar and post-war periods are instrumental in showing how she consolidated her war-time experiences and drew out a more essential teaching from them, such as her belief in the healing potential of suffering and the need to rise above differences to achieve some kind of cosmic, universal communion with others.

At this point it is worth taking stock of how Rosenblatt, Greene, Mezirow, and H.D. contribute to our understanding of being in quest. Rosenblatt begins from her philosophical understanding of transactional being in the world, with its grounding in selective attention. She broadens this out to involve choices in values by which to live and make sense of the world, which most importantly involves weighing up equally positive values and the existential challenges involved in this process. She ties this into a broader democratic mission to test and weigh up the impact of particular values on actual human lives, as the basis for creating a more humane society in America. The language arts and language arts teacher in particular have a role in nurturing the individual’s life in language. The aesthetic experience of literature specifically involves a transactional interplay of different, emotionally involved worlds. By becoming more sensitive to this interplay, learners may be able to grow in the ability to formulate, share, and critique the values which shape people’s behaviour and attitudes.

⁶⁰ I refer again to Matte Robinson’s detailed work, *The Astral H.D.: Occult and Religious Sources and Contexts for H.D.’s Poetry and Prose* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016).

Maxine Greene, however, works from an explicitly existentialist position and emphasises the indeterminacy of identity and being, and the importance of launching off into quest, using the arts to help ‘thematize experience over time’ – to help individuals in concert with each other to create meaning that gives shape to their lives, which help them to ‘chart the lived landscape’.⁶¹ She therefore inflates a more specific preoccupation with value selection into the broader task of finding meaning in the experiences of life and art. Mezirow, also working in a broadly existentialist way, underscores the transformative potential of experiential engagement with the arts. Such transformations may occur in multiple ways, and more recent theorists emphasise the non-rational, spiritual, affective, and social dimensions of personal and social transformation.

Through an analysis of H.D.’s developing experience of being in quest, the existential quality is highlighted, but so is the ultimately individual and personal nature of quest. H.D. sourced and adapted different knowledge discourses in order to process her experience and write herself. She worked in a modernist moment that was sensitive to the impact of war on the collapse of old values, and her work bears this hallmark of articulating new values for the consoling of shattered selves. And yet her example transcends this particular historical moment. She shows how one can creatively synthesise initially inapposite discourses, such as psychoanalysis and astrology, in the service of communicating meaning not only to her own existence, but to the lives of others as well.

While the dynamics of the transactional literary experience have thus far been in abeyance in this chapter, it is important to remember that Rosenblatt and H.D. are ultimately concerned with art and with an individual’s personal engagement with art as part of a broader quest for meaning. This link will become clearer in the final section. The question that must

⁶¹ For further thought on ‘meaning’ and education, see Anders Schinkel, Doret J. De Ruyter and Ahron Aviram, ‘Education and Life’s Meaning’, *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 50 (2016): 398-418.

now be asked, however, is how does this preoccupation with value formation, existential and romantic individuality, and personal and social transformation intersect with definitions of wisdom? In order for the quest for wisdom to be operative in higher education, it needs to square more clearly with institutional frameworks for the acquisition and articulation of wisdom. After a consideration of wisdom definitions and the institutional framework in which these may be operative, I turn to conversations in literary studies that seem to be receptive to the quest for wisdom via transactional literary experiences.

Creating Wisdom in the University: Walsh and Maxwell

The psychologist Roger Walsh and the philosopher Nicholas Maxwell are thinkers who have recently set themselves the task of establishing a rationale for taking wisdom more seriously in academic intellectual life. Walsh has confined himself to developing a cross-disciplinary synthesis of wisdom definitions, and Maxwell continues to campaign and write books about the need for an academic revolution.⁶² As Walsh writes in his paper, ‘What is Wisdom?’ (2015), the relative neglect of wisdom, meaning concern for what is wisdom and how one might reach it, by the intellectual community in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, is to be very much regretted, ‘because most major problems in our modern world reflect the need for wisdom’.⁶³ It is this premise that Maxwell also shares, but in his hands the major culprit is a faulty intellectual paradigm that produces ‘knowledge’ frequently dissociated from what he repeatedly refers to as ‘problems of living’, and which in concrete terms often coalesce around global warming, war, terrorism, and vast inequalities in wealth among populations.

⁶² As well as writing letters to national newspapers and giving talks, Maxwell also steers the Friends of Wisdom network.

⁶³ Roger Walsh, ‘What is Wisdom? Cross-Cultural and Cross-Disciplinary Syntheses’, *Review of General Psychology*, 19 (2015): 278-93, p. 278.

In 2014 Maxwell acknowledged that some trends in academic culture, mostly individual research centres, such as the UK's Cambridge Environmental Initiative (CEI), suggest that academics are starting to address the need to engage more directly with social problems – to solve them as much as study them.⁶⁴ And yet his philosophical work frames the intellectual work necessary to reconfigure academic inquiry at its root, and for this he turns back to the Enlightenment and the romantic dissidence active at the time. Thus, Maxwell also credits romanticism and existentialism with questioning and destabilising some of the Enlightenment's cherished beliefs, such as perfectionism, rationality, and empiricism. Yet Maxwell, like Rosenblatt, believes that the emotions and rationality need not be in conflict, and a swing either way to excessive classicism or to excessive romanticism would be disastrous.⁶⁵ From Maxwell's philosophical argument, one can then turn to Walsh and flesh out the concept of wisdom through his far-reaching synthesis.

It should be stressed, however, that wisdom is ultimately resistant to rigid classification. The growth in wisdom measurement scales (the Berlin Wisdom Paradigm, the Adult Self-Transcendence Inventory, the Self-Assessed Wisdom Scale, etc.), alongside other self-help materials in the past few decades is testament to the relentless drive among wisdom academics to try and measure and define wisdom, and to try and help people assess their own wisdom levels (the phrase even sounds faintly ridiculous, as if they can be 'topped up' at a filling station!). As reflexivity is arguably also a quality often associated with wise thinking, one might argue that, when thinking about wisdom, it might be wise never to try and pin it down, in

⁶⁴ Nicholas Maxwell, *How Universities Can Help Create a Wiser World: The Urgent Need for an Academic Revolution* (Exeter: Societas, 2014), pp. 86-96. The University of Nottingham's Centre for Research in Human Flourishing represents an additional nexus of research approximating a quest for wisdom.

⁶⁵ In *Two Great Problems of Learning: Science and Civilization* (Rounded Globe e-book, 2016) Maxwell reprises the Enlightenment framework with more vigour, with consequences for his humanistic outlook. See Richard Vytiniorgu, 'Review – Two Great Problems of Learning', *Metapsychology*, 20 (2016): http://metapsychology.mentalhelp.net/poc/view_doc.php?type=book&id=7746&cn=394 (accessed October 5, 2016).

language or in individual persons. Instead, one should talk of approximations toward wisdom, of the experience of wisdom, of a flexible and tolerant way of engaging the world, a creative selectivity of values and the imaginative capacity to determine their possible impact on actual human beings. For this, a personalist form of literary study seems of preeminent importance. The emphasis on engaging with the experience of others in fictional and poetic worlds, on processing one's own experience like a palimpsest, and on possibly garnering new insights about oneself and others – these can be woven into a form of written communication, such as transactional criticism (see Chapter 2), which can be more exploratory and discursive about wisdom than something more scientific.

From Knowledge to Wisdom

Perhaps the most fundamental distinction that Nicholas Maxwell makes is (1) thinking about problems in such a way that the thinking remains totally detached from the problems, and (2) thinking about problems of living in such a way that the thinking changes the actual situation. This may seem like an insignificant distinction, but Maxwell's entire project is concerned with dissolving walls in academia so that academics become concerned with 'the thinking that goes on in the great world beyond academia, guiding personal, institutional, social, and global life'.⁶⁶ Indeed, his approach echoes Berdyaev's belief that true thinking is always creative, that it is intensely identified with what is known, and that to varying degrees the thinker hopes to change what it is contemplated – to move from 'what is' to 'what ought to be', which implies the weighing of values based on an empathic, imaginative contemplation of their possible effect on individual personalities.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 16.

⁶⁷ Berdyaev, *Dream and Reality*, p. 87.

Maxwell's major criticism of modern academic inquiry is, contrary to the traditional romantic disagreement, that academic inquiry is not rational *enough*; indeed, he frequently refers to it as irrational. What he means by this is that its aims are wrong.⁶⁸ Instead of fragmenting knowledge into specialised disciplines, Maxwell believes that the starting point should be thoughtful discussion about some of the central problems of living that face the world today, and then from this, working out what needs to be done (and known) in order to help solve these problems. Knowledge *about* social and natural phenomena is simply not enough, and he credits this current paradigm with actually causing some of the great problems we face today, such as complex warfare, global warming, and the spread of disease. This is why the paradigm he hopes to initiate is called 'wisdom-inquiry', because the aims of such inquiry are radically opposed to 'knowledge-inquiry'. Maxwell writes: 'The basic aim of wisdom-inquiry is wisdom, understood to be the capacity and the active desire to realize what is of value in life, for oneself and others'.⁶⁹ When he says 'realize', Maxwell means this in the sense of actualising as well as comprehending.

There is an essentially creative component to Maxwell's wisdom-inquiry, which squares well with the transactional literary experience and the quest for wisdom. As Greene and Mezirow have shown in particular, to be in quest is to be creative, concerned with imagination, emotional awareness, and the creation of appropriate context-embedded values. With Rosenblatt, of course, the transactional method is founded upon a creative approach to reading imaginative literature, and so it is not a big step to Maxwell's vision of wisdom-inquiry, with its emphasis on 'co-operative rationality' – the ability to discuss with others matters of vital importance to those concerned. Moreover, there is a personalist quality to Maxwell's vision which it is necessary to stress because *at times* his ideas can seem rather abstract and

⁶⁸ For a more detailed scholarly analysis of the argument, see Nicholas Maxwell, *From Knowledge to Wisdom: A Revolution for Science and the Humanities* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1984).

⁶⁹ Maxwell, *How Universities*, p. 22.

unconcerned with the actualities of individual existence. He writes that literary study needs to be put ‘close to the heart of rational inquiry, in that it explores imaginatively our most profound problems of living and aids personalistic understanding in life by enhancing our ability to enter imaginatively into the problems and lives of others’.⁷⁰ Such a sentiment could come directly from the pages of *Literature as Exploration*, or indeed *Releasing the Imagination*, and impacts the goals of literary education.

Inevitably, as with any expansive vision, there are complexities with ‘wisdom-inquiry’, and Maxwell appreciates that a rigid division between knowledge-inquiry and wisdom-inquiry may not always serve his cause. Fundamentally, Maxwell is important to the quest for wisdom via literary experiences because he offers an intellectual path for making space in the modern university for wisdom to be a valid goal of a literary education. Perhaps by turning to definitions of wisdom, one might be able to see even more clearly how being in quest of wisdom is an appropriate learning context for literary experience. By nuancing our understanding of what wisdom might mean, it may be more amenable to assimilation in contemporary literary studies, which, as I show in the next section, are becoming ever more receptive to ideas and sentiments with which the quest for wisdom and literary experience are intimately concerned.

Personalising Wisdom

In his paper, ‘What is Wisdom?’ Walsh begins with historical Western conceptions of wisdom, and generally divides them into a focus on general and practical forms of wisdom.⁷¹ General wisdom refers to thought applied to the central existential issues of life; it may spring from intuitions, but generally speaking there is usually some additional thought required. It is this type of wisdom, in Greek referred to as *sophia*, that is classically the preserve of sages and

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 59.

⁷¹ See also Charles Cassidy’s invaluable crunching and synthesis of wisdom research: <https://evidencebasedwisdom.com> (accessed online: August 10, 2016).

‘wise men’, and is often a gendered concept. It is probably *sophia* that H.D. rebels against in her revisionist poems, *Trilogy* and *Helen in Egypt*, in which Wisdom (with a capital ‘W’) stands for all that is oppressive and itself in need of re-evaluation. On the other hand, practical wisdom tends to be the domain of the ‘old wives’ tale’ and proverbial literature, leading to a tendency to smug aphorisms and neat quips about how to deal with rather superficial personal difficulties. When Rosenblatt talks about the need for the literature classroom to be a place in which young people especially can garner insight about issues in their own lives, through the distancing yet intimate powers of the literary experience, she is effectively trying to synthesise these two classical approaches to wisdom in a meaningful way. The goal is to experience personally some of the more central existential issues of life, even if the individual hasn’t encountered them in his own life yet. This is a significant affordance of the literary experience – its potential to lead individuals into new experiences and thus possible wisdom that may otherwise be inaccessible.

Yet Walsh’s contribution is also to extend existing definitions of wisdom and, especially by integrating eastern approaches to wisdom, to emphasise the experiential, quest-like nature of engaging wisdom. Thus, when he offers some common features of wisdom, such as prosocial attitudes and behaviours, value relativism, perspicacity, ability to handle ambiguity, and self-understanding, he does so in such a way as to emphasise the transformative process of becoming wise. It is a personalistic project in the sense of being concentrated in the individual and the refraction of these wise qualities through distinct personalities. This complicates any attempt to apply standardised measurement scales, given that wisdom will always be appropriated and exercised in personalised ways and in concrete situations. What might be wise for one person may be folly for another. So one might begin to talk of an existential, personalist wisdom assessment in the same way that existential psychoanalysis aimed to take into account a person’s psychic dynamics in the context of their wider existence.

Applied to literary study, the aim would be to discern a conscious attempt to engage experientially with the value-laden world of a given literary work or set of literary works. Or, through understanding the logic of a student's personalist construction of textual sociability, one might also apprehend a student's developing sense of the complexities of their own personality and life, as well as the lives and individualities of others. As I showed in Chapter 3, while an approach to these concerns may be overt at times, especially through seminar discussion or symposia (for academics), the palimpsestuous nature of the transactional literary experience safeguards an individual's privacy by layering any personal discoveries into a discussion of the contours of the fictional world in question. Indeed, this was H.D.'s primary way of maintaining both her integrity as well as her identity as an artist. Placing the transactional literary experience within the quest for wisdom in no way turns English students and academics into philosophers, though it does engage them in philosophy; they become integrated thinkers.

To echo the conclusions of Chapter 3, in the existential sense, to think of wisdom as a realistic target for literary study would indeed make philosophers out of learners, if to philosophise in this context is to intuit, conceptualise, discuss, and creatively construct an evaluation of their engagement with literature, in such a way as to move towards some broader conclusions about (to echo Maxwell) what is of value in life, for oneself and for others. This need not be done in a simplistic or gauche manner; one can be as creative and subtle as the assignment or project requires. But the goal posts have shifted, essentially. No longer would credit be given primarily for what Rosenblatt would consider secondary forms of analysis (formal criticism, literary history, textual scholarship, etc.), but much more so for aligning literary experiences with one's existential quest for wisdom, in the context of a broader social movement toward a better world, redolent with possibility, justice, and tolerance.

Maxwell, Walsh, and, to some extent Greene and Mezirow as well, are generally outside literary studies specifically, although their insights are crucial to articulating what the quest for

wisdom might mean in literary studies. Yet within literary studies itself, over recent years attention given to various concerns indicates that we are moving into a climate that can accommodate the transactional literary experience as a pedagogical movement for those who wish to situate themselves openly in quest of wisdom. Concern for the human, for affect, and for ethics speak to different aspects of the dialogue I have created between Rosenblatt and H.D., and it is to these that I turn now.

New Directions for Literature and the Human, Affect, and Ethics

At the outset of this thematic discussion the most important point to establish is that together, Rosenblatt and H.D. require that a consideration of literature's relationship to the human, affect, and ethics be reflexively studied in relation to the reader's literary experience as well as these relationships inside literature. In fact, the transactional approach would take issue with an implied separation between literature and its readers in the first place. Insights into the representation of human beings in literature, its affective power, and its concern with ethics all arise within the mental activity of the reader who has deliberately set herself to think about these issues, self-conscious of herself and the ways in which she has evoked the literary work of art from the text. Any new directions proposed by this thesis therefore need to be studied reflexively, returning issues of learning to the heart of these long-standing concerns of literary theory.

Literature and the Human

Andy Mousley, who has already featured periodically in this thesis, is perhaps the most significant theorist currently writing about literature's relationship to the human, profoundly interested in what he calls 'literature's human significance, interest and appeal' – issues with which critics and theorists sometimes forget about or obscure and place at 'a sceptical

distance'.⁷² Derek Attridge's *The Singularity of Literature* (2004) should also be considered a contribution to evaluating literature's relationship to the human, and indeed to affect and ethics also. In one sense Attridge's work has the advantage over Mousley's in that he is more willing to discuss how readers perform literary works on themselves, and through this performance – this event in time – engage with literature's 'singularity', by which he means its ability to engage and transform an individual's 'idioculture' – a concept which denotes all that is individually refracted in an individual of wider culture.⁷³ Attridge comes extremely close to Rosenblatt in his insistence that literature comes into being through an experience akin to a performance, which is the metaphor Rosenblatt began to use from the 1960s.⁷⁴ Attridge even acknowledges Rosenblatt and writes that after he completed his book, he 'found much in her account of "transactional reading" that chimes with my argument for reading as performance'.⁷⁵ I can only suggest that Attridge's book met with such critical acclaim (with regard to originality) among English academics because he wrote from within a more restricted literary field in which Rosenblatt was less well-known, whereas Rosenblatt's need to explicitly factor in student learning experiences ultimately pushed her to the fringes of literary theory and, as I have said, her legacy now lives on primarily in education departments.

On the other hand, it could be argued that the more organic approach which Attridge and Mousley adopt, talking about literature's relationship to the human through close reading of literary texts rather than through philosophical theorising, means that their contribution to literary studies is more obvious, if ultimately not as holistic as Rosenblatt's. Even so, I would suggest that Attridge failed to appreciate fully the implications of the transactional approach. By extracting only one of Rosenblatt's core commitments – to literature as performance –

⁷² Andy Mousley, *Literature and the Human: Criticism, Theory, Practice* (London: Routledge, 2013), p. 2.

⁷³ Derek Attridge, *The Singularity of Literature* (London: Routledge, 2004).

⁷⁴ Louise M. Rosenblatt, *Literature as Exploration*, 4th ed. (New York: MLA, 1983), pp. 277-91.

⁷⁵ Attridge, *The Singularity of Literature*, p. 144.

Attridge was able to continue with his obviously literary-theoretical agenda and side-line Rosenblatt's political and educational commitments, which, I would argue, are foundational to appreciating the significance of literature as performance and which, moreover, would have necessitated explicit commentary on literature's human significance in terms of pedagogy.

Even though Mousley does not address issues of learning directly, his interest in literature's human value nevertheless touches on its transformative potential, in particular its ability to particularise human experience through its foregrounding of character – 'one of literature's staple generators of emotion'.⁷⁶ Mousley is concerned with literature's potential to console, challenge, awaken, disturb, and pacify, through engagement with individual human characters. His vision of literature is very much a meeting-ground of human personalities and a potential meshing of diverse human experiences. He emphasises the embodiment of human experiences in literature by the individualities of especially fictional characters. In this sense Mousley perhaps even moves beyond humanism to personalism, by emphasising the need to engage with the particularity of specific characters. However, his talk of persistent human traits and 'the human' as a valid philosophical category seems to crystallise his commitment to a more humanist than personalist orientation.

By emphasising personal engagement with literature, Mousley echoes Valentine Cunningham's sentiments in *Reading After Theory* (2002) in which the primary purpose of engaging with literature at all is because of its potential to 'feed' us – to help nourish us as humans in an Arnoldian fashion.⁷⁷ According to Cunningham, reading literature can be 'a selving, self-making process'.⁷⁸ Such a process involves 'a kind of self-knowledge, an education in understanding and feeling one's own condition. It's a sentimental education. It's a

⁷⁶ Mousley, *Literature and the Human*, p. 131.

⁷⁷ Valentine Cunningham, *Reading After Theory* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), p. 148.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

kind of self-affirming too'.⁷⁹ As I have shown in this thesis, the literary experience in the context of a quest for wisdom also draws the self out to encounter others and possibly broaden one's experiences and outlook on life, and in Chapter 3 I critiqued Cunningham for placing too much faith in a corporeal metaphor for reading, which belies the actual distance between readers and texts. But essentially, the embodiment of human experiences in affectively potent characters offers the potential to feed us and help us to 'selve' ourselves.

Where Mousley, Attridge, and Cunningham approach the question of educative value of literature in terms of broader human development, Rosenblatt and H.D. together allow for a much more explicit picture, in which a 'selving, self-making process' can become part of the existential quest for wisdom, in which aesthetic experience of literature plays a pivotal role – a role which cements the link between transactional reading and transactional being in the world. Where Mousley speaks of the capacity of literature to embody human personality, Rosenblatt adopts transactionalism as a philosophically preferable view of human being in the world, one which extends to the experience of literature which is transformative to varying degrees. Rosenblatt also stresses the transactional nature of the learning environment, in which readers join in quest one with another and move forward to a pluralistic environment in which each person can develop freely and fully by creating the conditions in which others can do so as well. H.D., meanwhile, questions the limits of cognising the human in aesthetic experience of text, through her emphasis on wisdom occurring through bodily touch and dwelling in proximity to one another. She gestures toward Mezirow's and Greene's emphasis on different languages for engaging the human through the arts, synthesising the visual with the verbal, the kinetic with the aural.

Without wishing to anticipate my discussion in the Conclusion about the subject matter of literary studies, the implication here is that the quest for wisdom via literary experience

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 153.

requires a more multi-modal kind of learning, which permits the human to be approached in multi-sensorial ways, in a learning environment that also seeks to bring human beings together through literary experiences in innovative and democratic ways. English educationalists have been arguing for multi-modal approaches to literary study for some time now, in what has been called a ‘convergence culture’ of media forms, so what the quest for wisdom adds to this commitment is a re-configured learning goal, from knowledge to wisdom (to echo Maxwell).⁸⁰ In other words, it is a goal which is focused more on personal and social transformation, existential authenticity, and the growth of human personalities to their fullness of being, rather than simply the accumulation of knowledge *about* literature and the human, important though this is in its rightful place in the process of exploring the literary experience. The affective potential of studying literature in a ‘convergence culture’ is arguably much greater, because learners are confronted with the human in a more holistic way, adding sight, hearing, and perhaps even touch, to their traditional activity of imaginative reading of text; the multi-modal approach gestures at the learning potential of affective presence, of physical proximity to the other.

Literature and Affect

In Mousley’s work in particular, a re-evaluation of the relationship of literature to the human also entails an exploration into literature’s relationship to affect. He weaves his own thoughts on this link into a broader ‘resurgence in literary affect’, represented by the work of Patrick

⁸⁰ For example, see Henry Jenkins, *Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture: Media Education for the 21st Century* (MacArthur Foundation, 2006), p. 46.

https://www.macfound.org/media/article_pdfs/JENKINS_WHITE_PAPER.PDF (accessed October 4, 2016); see also Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (New York: New York University Press, 2006).

Colm Hogan, Suzanne Keen, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, and Jenefer Robinson (among others).⁸¹ What much of this work has in common is its reliance on modern neuroscientific research on the nature of emotions, then applied to literature. Brigid Lowe, on the other hand, uses the Victorian novel as a way of moving critical sensibilities away from the ‘hermeneutics of suspicion’, toward an intersubjective notion of sympathy which Victorian novels were often keen to propagate.⁸² The work of the former authors works as a bridge to Text World Theory and its scientific interest in readers’ (affective) entrance into fictional worlds (see Chapter 3). Yet Lowe and Mousley work more tightly within literature itself in order to impact literary criticism and theory; Lowe in terms of critiquing a discourse of suspicion more generally; and Mousley by re-evaluating literary criticism’s current intense interest in history.

As Chapters 2 and 3 revealed, the transactional literary experience and its undertaking within the context of a quest for wisdom has significant consequences for how a learner approaches the thorny issue of history and difference. Reliant on a subtle vision of aesthetic experience for its successful enactment, the transactional literary experience urges a re-configuration of literary contexts, from historical to existential ones – to contexts legislated by the personal learner based on the emotional and intellectual reverberations triggered by pressures within the literary experience. I have termed this form of context ‘personalist textual sociability’. The shift in contextual possibilities is made possible because of a prior commitment to the individual and her experience – to a sense of the humanity of the learner, in other words. The aesthetic experience, through its emphasis on the affective dimension of understanding as well as the cognitive, foregrounds the ways in which readers may respond emotionally to fictional and poetic worlds.

⁸¹ Mousley, *Literature and the Human*, p. 14. See Patrick Colm Hogan, *What Literature Teaches Us About Emotion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003).

⁸² Brigid Lowe, *Victorian Fiction and the Insights of Sympathy: An Alternative to the Hermeneutics of Suspicion* (London: Anthem Press, 2007).

In his work, Mousley frames this response in terms of incarnation and cathexis and the characterological way in which literature communicates history.⁸³ Through an analysis of Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, Mousley suggests that characters or speakers, or in this instance 'spirits', are 'the holding places for elemental emotions – anger, venom, outrage, spite, vengefulness, fear of abandonment, love, need for love, remorse – to be defended against the emotionless, disaffected, censored, sanitised history'.⁸⁴ Instead of rejecting the claim of literature upon history, Mousley speaks of multiple histories and ways of apprehending the historical, and literature's principal method is through affective engagement of specific human situations and experiences.

This thesis basically affirms an experiential way of cognising the past and weaving its complexities into the trajectory of one's own stream of existence. To this end, it is worth recalling the philosophical frameworks within which H.D. and Rosenblatt considered affect and its relationship to the human. Rosenblatt, via Dewey and William James, is interested in finding the emotion within reason and so eroding a distinction between the two; in this she approximates a Russian school of personalism focused on the rationality of the heart. Her theory of the literary experience seeks to foster rational thinking within an emotionally coloured experience; thinking about literature and the human element in literature is therefore supposed to prepare one to think rationally in emotional situations in the rest of life – to become wiser, and to foster emotional homeostasis. As a modernist influenced by Bergson, H.D., on the other hand, is interested in modes of private time that release the individual from subservience to clock time. Bryony Randall has framed H.D.'s work in the context of Bergsonian notions of the *durée* and the day as the most psychologically significant marker of time, which in part explains H.D.'s aesthetic interest in 'the hour' as an encapsulation of psychological and spiritual

⁸³ Mousley borrows 'characterological' from Amanda Anderson's *The Way We Argue Now* (2006); *ibid.*, pp. 46-47.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 69.

activity.⁸⁵ H.D.'s sympathy with Bergsonian time manifests in her preference for the non-linear, for the repetitious and the re-materialisation of human experiences over time, suggestive of a more horizontal than vertical plane of existence, concentrated on affectively traversing time rather than travelling cognitively through it.

The significance of these conceptions of time and emotion in relation to literary experience and the quest for wisdom lies in Rosenblatt's and H.D.'s capacity to question conventional modes of context building. What H.D. and Rosenblatt gesture towards is a way of foregrounding the affective experience of literature as a significant means of re-configuring notions of structure and context, based more on the dynamics of the existential human microcosm than on an exteriorised, 'out-there' vision of verification. The romantic and existentialist contours of Rosenblatt's and H.D.'s thought are therefore most obvious in their connection between the value of the individual and a different approach to time and to history in the context of handling literary experiences.

To explore this a little connection further, one might return to Berdyaev. Also influenced to some degree by Bergson, the existentialist Berdyaev believed that 'history takes no notice of personality, of its individual unrepeatability, its uniqueness and irreplaceability'.⁸⁶ Initially this may run counter to the emphasis in this thesis on shared experience over time and space, but what Berdyaev is getting at here is history's exteriorisation and objectification of human experience – the very opposite of the characterological that becomes cathectic in the literary experience. Berdyaev pits 'existential time' against 'cosmic' and 'historical' time, the former being (like H.D.'s 'dream time') the most personal and human plane of existence, to which moments of (aesthetic) experience may often bring us. The crucial point that Berdyaev makes, however, is that the human is not to be projected into history, but rather, history is to be taken

⁸⁵ Bryony Randall, *Modernism, Daily Time and Everyday Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 34.

⁸⁶ Nicolas Berdyaev, *Slavery and Freedom*, trans. R. M. French (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1944), p. 255.

‘into his own infinite subjectivity, in which the world is part of man’.⁸⁷ This view is in accord with the exploration of the literary experience in Chapter 2, in which the individual learner becomes the legislator of context, effectively ‘taking all history into his own infinite subjectivity’.

Being in quest of wisdom is an existentialist project that unites with the transactional literary experience in opening up possibilities for re-evaluating one’s relationship to time. The affective experience of ‘the human’ in literary art enables the learner to ‘take all history into his own infinite subjectivity’ and to create unique, personalist contexts for investigating issues with which wisdom is intimately concerned. Finally, therefore, such a move is also an ethical one, because it can be framed in terms of emancipation – a release from the pressures of a certain understanding of time, into an intersubjective, existential realm of creative understanding.

Literature and Ethics

In his autobiography, Berdyaev explained how in the interwar period ‘everything that showed the slightest signs of human depth and insight, both in art and philosophy, came under the charge of romanticism’, and that he realised that ‘romanticism stands for everything that is human’ and was therefore ‘prepared to fight for it’.⁸⁸ Such a sentiment could also be applied to Rosenblatt and H.D., both of whom drew upon romantic and existentialist discourses in order to humanise their thought. Their work is undoubtedly of an ethical nature and it is for this reason that Rosenblatt, at any rate, has been related to an ‘ethical turn’ in literary theory.⁸⁹

What Elizabeth A. Flynn meant by the ‘ethical turn’ in her 2007 article for *College English* is that Rosenblatt can be connected to what Laurence Buell in 1999 called

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 267.

⁸⁸ Berdyaev, *Dream and Reality*, p. 105.

⁸⁹ Elizabeth A. Flynn, ‘Louise Rosenblatt and the Ethical Turn in Literary Theory’, *College English*, 70 (2007): 52-69.

‘postpoststructuralism’, or an ‘ethically valenced literary inquiry’.⁹⁰ This means two things: firstly, an ethical sensitivity to the human culture of literary creativity, and secondly, readerly responsibility to relate to the literary work in a ‘conscienceful’ manner. Flynn argued that Rosenblatt ‘insists on the humanness of both authors and readers. They are not constructs but people’.⁹¹ Meanwhile, Buell emphasises the ethical act of ‘listening’ to the human qualities of a literary work.⁹² For Rosenblatt, listening entails an explicit attempt to bring into the foreground issues of human values as part of the cultivation of democratic citizens who are capable of putting themselves into another person’s shoes and sensing the human impact of impersonal political decisions. Her commentaries over the decades on students discussing Joyce’s Stephen Dedalus as well as Ibsen’s *A Doll’s House*, in *Literature as Exploration*, and Emily Dickinson’s ‘I Heard a Fly Buzz’ in *Reader, Text, Poem*, for instance, are representative of Rosenblatt’s commitment to emphasising literature’s ability to particularise human experiences for their ethical consequences. While Rosenblatt modified and re-contextualised her theory from the 1920s to the 2000s, I would argue that the germination of her core vision took place in the interwar period, in which, as Berdyaev noted, romanticism was under attack. Her commitment to the ‘humanness’ of authors, readers, and characters in a ‘postpoststructuralist’ era is essentially a transmuted version of her youthful and passionate faith in Shelley’s vision of poets as the ‘legislators of mankind’ and literature’s intimate claim upon people.

If the question of ‘universals’ is turned to at this point, as it was in Chapter 3 during my discussion of the literary portrayal of human relations, Mousley has created a vocabulary for articulating the ways in which literature might help contemporary ‘postpoststructuralist’ readers to re-affirm or transform aspects of human experience evoked in literature from different

⁹⁰ Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 54.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

⁹² See Lawrence Buell, ‘In Pursuit of Ethics’, *PMLA*, 114 (1999): 7-19.

periods and places.⁹³ As a new humanist, Mousley frames his discussion in terms of coming to a needful consensus about what ‘the human is’, because ‘if we don’t have any sense of what the human condition is, then the human can be co-opted on behalf of anything and everything, from totalitarianism to raking gravel eighteen hours a day’.⁹⁴ Mousley’s work reaffirms the connection found in Rosenblatt between ways of reading and ethics, particularly regarding conceptions of the human which can be operationalised for better or for worse in actual situations.

Yet while ‘conscienceful listening’ to the ‘humanness’ of literary texts and contexts is perhaps the most obvious way in which this thesis speaks to the ethical in literary studies, there is a more significant aspect. The foundational emphasis on the individual, on the validity of his or her experience and existential quest, and on the inauguration of a different conception of time in the literary experience, point towards another ethical implication. The prioritising of personal contexts over historical ones and dream or existential time over clock or historical time indicates a mode of emancipation for the individual.

It is possible to read H.D.’s entire oeuvre, for example, as a struggle toward personal and creative emancipation from constraining patterns of thought and creative agency. Her gradual assimilation and transformation of non-traditional knowledge discourses, along with her incessant self-mythologising and palimpsestuous approach to history make H.D. a lodestar toward which learners might move in the quest for a more individual course of inquiry, somehow transcending traditional conceptions of historical contingency and pedagogical necessity. In other words, as someone with a highly developed sense of personality, H.D. approached time and space in such a way as to make these realities speak to her in intimate

⁹³ See Mousley, *Literature and the Human*, pp. 72-103.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 77.

ways. The palimpsestuous embraces the human face of history at the same time as controlling it through aesthetic distance.

Moreover, H.D. was brave enough to step outside the normal conventions of discourse with regard to psychoanalysis and psychic research, which can be framed as pedagogies designed to educate. Defining herself as a ‘wise-woman’ in *Bid Me to Live* seems to speak directly to her wisdom of gradually personalising knowledge discourses so that they fit into her own stream of life in a more complete way. Perhaps in the Rogerian sense of personal becoming, she finally learned to live less by fear and more by a sense of personal freedom. No longer did she feel completely ‘owned’ by her circumstances.

In exploring the literary experience, therefore, learners are freed to enter into existential time and from this affective experience of specific human beings in literature, to formulate and re-formulate their quest for wisdom. While the ethical in the transactional literary experience intimates at a weighing of values and the creation of new ones, it also signifies the freedom of the human learner to orient themselves to the literary in a new way, to build their own contexts for inquiry. Moving into existential time and being released from subservience to clock-time or historical time, the reader is perhaps at greater liberty to experience cathexis, to sense the embodiment of human experiences, and to use this affective turn to formulate a path of inquiry that can be consciously grounded in their overarching quest and the various interpretive points surfacing during the process of reflecting on the literary experience. If the goal of the quest for wisdom via transactional literary experiences can be framed, at least in part, as a mode of transformative learning, then the various key aspects of this process – emotion, identity, growth, connection – can be located as integral parts of literary study, as key markers in the future of English studies.

Conclusion

This chapter has sought to broaden the discussion by considering what the quest for wisdom means in relation to the transactional literary experience, with which the previous three chapters have principally been concerned. Rosenblatt frames the literary experience as part of a generalist language arts education, geared toward the health of the individual and the nurture of a democratic society characterised by value selection and creativity. Maxine Greene and Jack Mezirow speak more explicitly about quest, and frame it as part of a broader existentialist movement toward self-awareness and becoming. Newer contributions to transformative learning stress the affective and spiritual dimensions of existential transformation, as well as recalling the social aspect of personal transformation, in which the individual is brought into dialogue with the other. An analysis of H.D.'s growth in quest and of how she explores this concept through her various professional phases develops the notion of quest by highlighting the creative element, in which various 'languages' can be employed and adapted according to the individual's needs. H.D.'s interest in literary experience and in modes of consciousness – explored in previous chapters – can thus be placed in an overarching existential and romantic quest for becoming, for creating her own mythology. H.D. uses art to grow in self-knowledge as well as to explore different values by which to create a more peaceful world.

The second half of the chapter focused more on the institutional dynamics of wisdom in the university, before it folded the quest for wisdom via transactional literary experiences into current conversations in literary studies about literature's relationship to the human, affect, and ethics. Roger Walsh and Nicholas Maxwell offer some useful pointers for weaving the insights of the existential quest and transformative learning into existing conceptions of wisdom and how academic inquiry more generally might be transformed in order to prioritise a movement towards wisdom. It should be stressed, however, that wisdom is essentially resistant to neat definition, and the overarching emphasis on existential experience in this chapter controls

consideration of the complex question of wisdom by recognising the need to personalise it. Wisdom is always something that is internalised and assimilated into the stream of a person's ongoing transactional experience in the world.

The emphasis on personalisation and the individual is also prominent in current conversations about literature and the human, affect, and ethics. This chapter contributes to these conversations by arguing that discussion of 'the human' can be streamlined as part of a more explicit quest for wisdom, utilising insights in English education which emphasise the benefits of multi-modal literary study, bringing learners even closer to the human and the ensuing consideration of values and myriad human experiences. Moreover, interest in affect chimes with Rosenblatt's insistence that literature be emotionally experienced and H.D.'s practice of approaching personalities in history through an affective palimpsestuous consciousness, simultaneously identifying herself with others as well as protecting herself through the aesthetic distance inherent in the palimpsestuous.

The question of the reader's and literature's relationship to history in literary study is further addressed by the form of context construction which H.D. and Rosenblatt gesture toward. This touches upon the ethical: readers are very much encouraged to sense the 'humanness' of characters and their fictional lives. Mousley has referred to characters as 'holding places' of emotion and experience.⁹⁵

But the ethical is also present in the need for readers to be free to internalise history and therefore be the legislators of their own literary contexts, which become the building blocks for writing about literature. Such a move is founded upon the central philosophical commitment which H.D. and Rosenblatt subscribe to, namely, the value of the individual and her experience. While both thinkers advocate some form of dialogue and conversation with others as part of

⁹⁵ Mousley, *Literature and the Human*, p. 69.

their existential quest, ultimately the person and their free and full growth is the preeminent marker to which all other considerations should submit.

Conclusion

If at this point a reader of this thesis can say of themselves, ‘I veer round, uncanonically seated stark upright with my feet on the floor’, then they will have shared in this thesis’s methodological personalism and its ambitious aims.¹ I have endeavoured to contribute to the formation of a personalist theory of literary studies by drawing upon Russian personalism in order to create a dialogue between two complementary American thinkers of differing types – one an analytic theorist and educator, and the other a mystical, highly intuitive and esoteric prose writer and poet. Rosenblatt and H.D. are not natural bedfellows and one of the main challenges throughout the process of writing this project has been to determine for myself the synergies between the two as well as the unmistakable differences.

If this thesis had been a more conventional literary-historical exploration of H.D. and Rosenblatt as two twentieth-century *writers*, then the task would have in fact been much harder. But my goal all along has been to read these figures as *thinkers*, which in H.D.’s case at least, is to intervene in the current of H.D. criticism, which has already witnessed attempts to understand her as a thinker as much as a writer, but which has yet to offer an extended study of her engagement with quest as a pedagogical process. And because I have read H.D. as a thinker, I have drawn upon methodologies appropriate to the philosophical domain of literary and cultural theory – broad and welcoming fields of different and innovative critical approaches.²

With Rosenblatt, on the other hand, the task has been a recuperative one. Ignored for so long by literary theorists and side-lined as a reader-response figure, Rosenblatt’s vision of literary studies has struggled for a voice, for a critic who understands and communicates its

¹ H.D., *Tribute to Freud* (New York: New Directions, 2012), p. 15.

² John Schad has referred to English as ‘a very broad church with all sorts of side chapels into which one can slope off and go after the strangest gods’. John Schad and David Jonathan Y. Bayot, *John Schad in Conversation* (Manila: De La Salle University Publishing House, 2015), p. 7.

significance. Being classified as a reader-response theorist has led to the general assumption that as such, she only cares about subjective individual reader reactions. In fact, nothing could be further from the truth. In a sense, as I showed in Chapter 1, Rosenblatt is profoundly concerned with the individual. But her transactional philosophy is also deeply social. Placed in conversation with H.D., it has been especially necessary for me to emphasise Rosenblatt's social vision, as I did in Chapters 3 and 4, because H.D.'s interest is generally in the self, and particularly her own experiences, although contrary to Ian Hamilton's speculation, this is not a bad thing; indeed, H.D.'s voice shines through as a singularly personalist one.³ But again, even for H.D., such a focus is tempered by her belief in the commonality of various human experiences across time and space. *Helen in Egypt*, for example, becomes a moment of affective contact between two personalities, one real (H.D.) and the other fictional or mythical (Helen). As Rosenblatt repeatedly pointed out in the 1990s and 2000s, her own advocacy of a continuum of reading stances – from efferent to aesthetic – was a move against what she saw as extreme pendulum swings: aesthetic or efferent, individual or social. One could even say that her continuum is a mark of wisdom, showcasing the kind of scrutiny and deliberation discussed in this thesis as a beneficial activity to follow the literary experience.

One of the principal arguments in this thesis has been that H.D.'s writing is a treasure trove for theorising 'the quest for wisdom'. Although H.D. never used such a term herself, I have shown how her autobiographical writing and writing from the 1940s onwards is concerned with her quest to engage with her experiences and find parallels in those of others throughout history, leading to self-renewal. Ultimately, H.D. is committed to creating herself as a personality, and her writing can be read as, among other things, her attempt to think through this project self-consciously. H.D. helps to bridge the gap between the literary and the

³ See Ian Hamilton, *Against Oblivion: Some Lives of the Twentieth-Century Poets* (London: Viking, 2002), pp. 62-66.

philosophical, the creative and the analytical, and as such also finds a parallel in Rosenblatt's aesthetic-efferent continuum, whereby in any given literary experience, the mind can shuttle between the aesthetic end of the reading scale and the efferent end. Both H.D. and Rosenblatt come close to Kireevsky's discourse of the 'rationalism of the heart', connecting reason and emotion.

While recent scholars of H.D. have concentrated on delineating her source material and the various contexts for placing her later, complex work, there is further scope for reading her writing to uncover her theoretical ideas about art, human relations, and education. I have examined all three of these areas, but separate studies could be devoted to each of these, perhaps entailing a more systematic exploration by way of breaking down different groups of texts and analysing some of the central thoughts expressed in these which might impact beyond an understanding of H.D. herself. How do her ideas of genetic inheritance, for example, intersect with other mystical ideas about racial characteristics? A multidisciplinary approach would suit this work best, drawing on both philosophy and literary history to strike a balance between conceptual analysis and contextualisation.

A similar project could be undertaken for Rosenblatt, reading her as a philosopher rather than an educator. Or rather, Rosenblatt would be served well if she could be squared more clearly within philosophy of education, so that her contribution to this field could become crystallised. I have sought to clarify Rosenblatt's engagement with literary theory by emphasising her institutional context; it was necessary to do so because my own thesis is a contribution to literary theory. But Rosenblatt is a multifaceted thinker who involved herself with multiple disciplines. It is understandable that she should have been celebrated and explored most fully in education circles, especially because her theory offers guidelines for developing practical teaching methods. But I am sure that this is not her only niche. If 1948 seems to be a symbolic year for Rosenblatt due to her move from a liberal arts department to a department of

education, I am convinced that she never bought wholesale into her newfound identity as an educator. That she published articles on Walt Whitman and Walter Pater in the 1960s and 1970s, some of which recycled material dating back to her doctoral work from the 1920s, is testament to her reluctance to abandon a 'literary' identity. Indeed, her PhD experience in the 1920s was especially formative, and at that stage in her life she was almost entirely encamped within literary circles, associating with poets and writers.

Finally, Rosenblatt's commitment to education itself needs to be engaged with much more substantially and critically. Although she distanced herself from the Progressive Education Association, which first published *Literature as Exploration*, she remained deeply committed to democracy and firmly believed that political and economic alterations, which would usher in an educational climate sympathetic to her transactional approach, would help save the world.⁴ In a sense, this thesis has undertaken a sceptical reading of Rosenblatt, because I have tried to indicate the ways in which Rosenblatt's faith in the abstract concept of democracy may in fact work against her otherwise personalistic vision of literary experience. But a more robust critique of Rosenblatt's educational humanism, while deepening understanding of her personalism, would serve her legacy well.

Principally, though, the ideas and practices developed in this thesis need to be explored in practice. This might happen on three levels. The first would be by continuing to re-evaluate the position of English as a discipline within the modern university and its overarching purpose in society. In this thesis I have argued via the thought of Nicholas Maxwell that framing the university's role as engaging in wisdom-inquiry would allow the quest for wisdom in literary studies to find an institutional sanction.

⁴ Eugene F. Provenzo Jr., 'Louise Rosenblatt Interview', School of Education, University of Miami. 14 March 1999. <http://www.education.miami.edu/ep/rosenblatt/> (accessed online, June 17 2015). See also Jeanne M. Connell, 'Continue to Explore: In Memory of Louise Rosenblatt (1904-2005)', *Education and Culture*, 21 (2005): 63-79.

Secondly, by working towards a broader institutional re-ordering of intellectual aims, the creation of new modules and programmes in English, which align with some of the approaches developed in this thesis, would become a distinct possibility. The kinds of modules which Rosenblatt developed at NYU (see Chapter 1) could be enhanced by enshrining a methodology of personalist textual sociability, thereby allowing students to engage in personalist literary study, which would manifest in the way in which they write their essays and discuss texts with others in class.

Thirdly, personalist literary studies can be put into practice by writing literary criticism which uses the methodology developed in this thesis. Essays and articles can organise their inquiry by invoking the mode of context foregrounded here, which works according to existential time rather than clock time. But fundamentally, the personalist angle, which values the quests for wisdom learners may be undertaking in various ways, would manifest in different aims of inquiry. Rather than seeking only to extend our knowledge of particular literary or cultural themes, personalist literary studies would primarily, though not exclusively, seek to contribute to public discussions about important existential issues. The literary critic thereby becomes a *literatus*. In *Literature as Exploration* Rosenblatt seems to assert that literary study need not make the choice between studying non-literary aspects such as ethics, and literary concerns such as the 'text'. Her theory of literary experience means that literary study can reasonably do *both* things. Therefore, personalist literary study can contribute to the understanding of literature at the same time as it grapples with questions of wisdom which take the attention outside the text to the world beyond. The key is in the nature of the literary experience, which this thesis has explored in detail. In the context of literary studies, the quest for wisdom can only find expression in and through the transactional literary experience, because it is this experience and the process of inquiry stemming from it which can adequately embrace and fuse both the literary and the non-literary.

However, discussion of practical aspects of personalist literary study prompts a question which I touched upon in Chapter 4 in my reading of Andy Mousley's new literary humanism, but which has lurked throughout. Although Rosenblatt refused to subscribe to traditional notions of the canon (as when she placed *Jane Eyre* alongside *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* as cognate texts dealing with female adolescence), there is a lack of sufficient attention in her writing given to alternative modes of aesthetic experience which move beyond the label of 'literature'.⁵ Indeed, at one point in *Literature as Exploration* she talks with disdain about 'the pulp magazines, comic books, or lurid drugstore paperbacks', referring to these as 'trashy writings'.⁶ Clearly, Rosenblatt's notion of 'good' writing depended on whether or not it could be classed as 'literature' – something which could enter positively into the developmental project of increasing the quality of students' literary experiences. As a theorist engaged in literacy, it seems natural that Rosenblatt should have focused on the written word (of promising quality) as the most appropriate subject material for 'English'. But her theory in fact does not automatically lead to this conclusion, and H.D.'s writing is perhaps more generous in the kinds of material with which one can have an aesthetic experience (see Chapter 2). Indeed, in his preface to *Literature as Exploration*, Wayne Booth asked: 'Can we hope that Rosenblatt's plea that we treat reading as a transaction between two great kinds of stuff – literary works and living persons – will be extended more aggressively to the treatment of *viewing* as transactional in the same sense?'⁷ My conclusion is that Rosenblatt and H.D. implicitly both open themselves to the plea set forth by Anthony Easthope in his *Literary into Cultural Studies* (1991), whereby signifying practices are substituted for literature as the stimulus for inquiry in the discipline.⁸

⁵ Louise Rosenblatt, *Making Meaning with Texts: Selected Essays* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2005), p. 66.

⁶ Louise M. Rosenblatt, *Literature as Exploration*, 5th ed. (New York: MLA, 1995), pp. 59-60.

⁷ Wayne Booth, 'Foreword' in Louise M. Rosenblatt, *Literature as Exploration*, 5th ed. (New York: MLA, 1995), pp. vii-xiv, p. xiii, original emphasis.

⁸ Antony Easthope, *Literary into Cultural Studies* (Routledge: London, 1994). Cultural studies has, of course, morphed since Easthope's book, and indeed was born well before its arrival. For an evaluation of its current status and its internal complexities, see Chris Barker and Emma A. Jane, *Cultural Studies: Theory and Practice* (London: Sage, 2016).

For Easthope the main benefit of this transition is to allow space for the study of ‘popular culture’ and to discard once and for all the distinction between ‘high’ and ‘low’ forms of practices, thereby creating his own kind of democratic, poststructural (anti-binary) study. But I would urge a note of caution, or rather, an additional caveat. My thesis has posited aesthetic experiences with ‘texts’ as the basis for a personalist quest for wisdom in the university. The key point that Easthope seems to overlook is that signifying practices still require an individual to transact with them personally and *aesthetically* if there is to be the kind of education that fosters qualities of self-criticism and conversation with others about human experience – that might lead to wisdom, in other words. In fact, he even seeks the eradication of the aesthetic from cultural studies: ‘Cultural studies promises to step aside from this whole Kantian project. By including texts of everyday life in its object of study it can challenge if not circumvent entirely the privileged self-enclosure of the aesthetic’.⁹ By enclosing the aesthetic within modernist practices in particular, which he wishes to dispense with, Easthope excludes the possibility of any other role for the aesthetic.¹⁰ But I contend that the aesthetic, personal, and transactional experience of signifying practices is crucial to the vivifying of these practices in the first place – making them agents for change in the present, in other words.¹¹ What this means is that a re-configured notion of ‘English’ must offer space for aesthetic experiences of signifying practices that intimately connect the aesthetic with the social, or the literary with the non-literary. In the cradle of the literary experience lie the seeds for further thinking about human experience, not in generalist terms, but through the concrete, emotionally-coloured cast of art. This is something to celebrate, not denigrate.

⁹ Ibid., p. 166.

¹⁰ I think it would be unusual to find a theorist today, even a theorist of cultural studies, who would be quite so antagonistic towards the aesthetic. The ‘new aestheticism’, among other more recent developments, has helped to deepen the role of the aesthetic in literary studies.

¹¹ Easthope affirms the cultural materialist emphasis on reading texts in light of present concerns. See *ibid.*, p. 168.

Such a move would also honour one of Rosenblatt's other treasured convictions, this time concerning non-Anglophone texts. Trained in comparative literature, Rosenblatt advocated that non-English literature in translation be studied alongside Anglophone texts. The reason behind this connects to the overall drive towards questions of wisdom, of how to make the most of our lives together in this world. By allowing literary students license to engage with non-English 'texts' as a matter of routine rather than under the umbrella of 'literature in translation', discussion about differences and understanding of unfamiliar contexts can, for Rosenblatt, be stimulated with a view to questioning and revising one's own culture.¹²

Perhaps the most significant practical implication of my thesis, then, is to affirm cultural studies' predilection for studying other forms of media than the written word as signifying practices, with the important caveat that they be approached via transactional, aesthetic experience. But of course the ends of such study in my view are rather different from those of cultural studies, at least from the Eastopian version. Concerned with a transition from knowledge-inquiry to wisdom-inquiry, this thesis seeks to channel aesthetic engagement with signifying practices through people's personal quests for meaning in life, however they are articulated by themselves. When designing courses and writing personalist, transactional criticism for example, one might expect to see films set alongside novels, or poems set alongside music videos, as occurs in cultural studies. But in this instance, subject material would be linked by a process of personalist textual sociability and harnessed by an ambition to grapple with some of life's insuperable challenges, or even just those concerns which, if explored in a course of study, might lead the learner to a sense of emotional or intellectual satisfaction. The difference between cultural studies and personalist literary study lies in the fact that where cultural studies largely rests on a trajectory of neo-Marxist cultural critique,

¹² See Rosenblatt, *Making Meaning*, pp. 51-58. The University of Birmingham, for example, is sympathetic to a comparative approach within an English degree, offering an undergraduate module in 'Landmarks in European Literature', using foreign works of different historical periods in translation.

personalist literary studies is less prescriptive about the direction literary experiences take, seeking instead to embrace aspects of cultures past and present, near and remote, as well as to revise and seek new visions – all contingent on the specific qualities of individuals' quests and how they negotiate these together.

I am not going to end my thesis now as Rosenblatt ended her seminal text, *Literature as Exploration*, where she wrote that 'Literary experiences will [...] be a potent force in the growth of critically minded, emotionally liberated individuals who possess the energy and the will to create a happier way of life for themselves and for others'.¹³ I believe that the quest for wisdom via literary experiences can indeed help nurture the growth of personalities who can demonstrate qualities of sensitivity and humanity. But I fall short of arguing that the teaching and study of literature is guaranteed to counteract human suffering and evil in the world and thus make us 'happier', for as George Steiner famously remarked in relation to Auschwitz, educated (not to say 'cultured') people hurt themselves and others too, and we still ask 'why?'.¹⁴

Berdyayev even claimed that an individual 'does not strive for happiness at all. Such striving would be objectless and meaningless. Man strives for concrete values and goods, the possession of which may give him bliss or happiness, but happiness itself cannot be his conscious purpose'.¹⁵ Wisdom, therefore, cannot be considered the same as happiness. To be in quest of wisdom is to engage with 'literature' for its capacity to increase self-understanding, spark self-development, ignite the imagination that 'magically creates realities', open possibilities for healing, for transcendence, for the new. This is a very different project than one based on happiness – 'the emptiest and most meaningless of human words'.¹⁶

¹³ Rosenblatt, *Literature as Exploration*, 5th ed., p. 262.

¹⁴ Easthope, *Literary into Cultural Studies*, p. 9.

¹⁵ Nicolas Berdyayev, *The Destiny of Man*, trans. Natalie Duddington (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1945), p. 74.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, pp. 74-75.

To return to one of H.D.'s images which I explored in Chapter 4, wisdom can be symbolised by the thistle and the serpent – the presence of suffering and the awakening of new life, a deeper realisation of personality. What literary studies has done so well to prove in the past thirty years or so is that, as Berdyaev wrote in the 1930s in relation to developments in psychology, 'Man is a sick being, with a strong unconscious-life [*sic*] [...] He frequently does not know what is going on in him and wrongly interprets it both to himself and to others'.¹⁷ What literary studies needs to do now, then, in the classroom, the conference hall, and in pieces of academic writing, is to celebrate those sensations of thaw, moments of transformation, flickers of integration be they ever so tentative, for they are precious. They are the stuff of life, the emergence of personality. Wisdom is born.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 68.

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